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Eucharist: prayer, communion, unity

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EUCCHARIST: PRAYER, COMMUNION, UNITY

Thesis

Submitted to

The College of Arts and Sciences of the

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

Master of Arts in Theological Studies

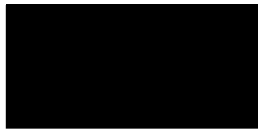
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Dayton, Ohio
August, 2010



EUCARIST: PRAYER, COMMUNION, UNITY

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ABSTRACT

EUCHARIST:

PRAYER, COMMUNION, UNITY

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The purpose of this thesis is to assert the theological connection between the Eucharistic Prayer and sacramental Communion. On this basis it argues that the Eucharistic Prayer ritually functions as the “heart” and “center” of the Mass, while the reception of sacramental Communion, specifically the Communion Procession, is more properly described as the ritual “summit” of the Eucharistic liturgy. It also emphasizes that the unity of the Body of Christ is the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist, which is deepened by the reception of sacramental Communion.

This vital relationship between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion is in need of additional theological development, as well as ritual attention and catechetical emphasis. Ultimately, such theological, ritual, and catechetical efforts could lead to an enhanced understanding of and appreciation for each element in its full theological richness, as well as deepen the full, conscious, and active participation in the Eucharist, the supreme sacrament of the Church.

Dedicated to

My son Nathaniel Gregory:

May you grow up with a deep love for Christ
and His abiding sacramental presence in the Church.

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I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. William Johnston, director of this thesis, for his immense patience, gentle guidance, and wisdom. His years of ministerial experience and his scholarly abilities combined with his love of the Church have provided both inspiration and resources for me to complete my work on this project.

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INTRODUCTION

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* proposes that the Eucharistic Prayer is the “center and summit” of the Mass.¹ It calls the Eucharistic Prayer the prayer of “thanksgiving and sanctification”, stating that “the entire congregation should join itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice...to God the Father, through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.”² The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* similarly calls it the “heart and summit” of the Eucharistic liturgy.³ Additionally, Pope Benedict XVI, in his recent post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the Eucharist *Sacramentum Caritatis*, affirmed these teachings, saying: “the Eucharistic Prayer is the center and summit of the entire celebration. Its importance deserves to be adequately emphasized.”⁴

Yet, despite these assertions made in contemporary magisterial teaching – liturgical, doctrinal, and papal documents – that the Eucharistic Prayer is the “summit” (as well as the “center” and “heart”) of the Mass, this thesis proposes that, instead, the reception of Communion, more so than the Eucharistic Prayer, is ritually the “summit” of the Eucharistic liturgy. Sharing in the real presence of Christ by the consumption of His Eucharistic Body and Blood is the culmination of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the ritual high point of the Mass. The *CCC* states: “The celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward

¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2003), 78.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1995), 1352.

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2007), 48.

the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion.”⁵ In fact, in his recent book on the Eucharist, Francis Cardinal Arinze (former Prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments) says of the lay faithful: “The high point is when they communicate at the Eucharistic table. This crowns their participation at the Eucharistic Sacrifice.”⁶ The bishops of the United States teach: “While the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, the consummation of the Mass is found in Holy Communion, whereby the people purchased for the Father by his beloved Son eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. They are thereby joined together as members of Christ’s mystical Body, sharing the one life of the Spirit. In the great sacrament of the altar, they are joined to Christ Jesus and to one another.”⁷

The purpose of this thesis is to assert the theological connection between the Eucharistic Prayer and sacramental Communion. Based on this theology, I will attempt to show that the Eucharistic Prayer indeed ritually functions as the “heart” and “center” of the Mass, while the reception of sacramental Communion, specifically the Communion Procession, is more properly described as the ritual “summit” of the Eucharistic liturgy. I also hope to emphasize that the unity of the Body of Christ is the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist, which is deepened by the reception of sacramental Communion.

I intend to demonstrate the vital relationship between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion which is in need of additional theological development, as well as ritual attention and catechetical emphasis. Ultimately, such theological, ritual, and catechetical efforts would lead to enhanced understanding of and appreciation for each

⁵ CCC, 1382.

⁶ Francis Cardinal Arinze, *Celebrating the Holy Eucharist* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2006), 41.

⁷ USCCB, *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2001), 5.

element in its full theological richness, as well as deepen the full, conscious, and active participation in the Eucharist, the supreme sacrament of the Church.

From a theological standpoint, rather than itself being the “center” of the Eucharistic liturgy, the Eucharistic Prayer has become, in the minds of many Catholics (at least in the West) a beautiful poetic package in which the real gift – the Institution Narrative and Consecration – is wrapped. This is a natural consequence of the development of “moment of consecration” theology and the Scholastic identification of this “moment” as the sacramental “form” of the Eucharist.

Yet, the Eucharistic Prayer fulfills the function of “center” of the Eucharistic liturgy because of its Trinitarian and doxological nature. The theological richness of the whole Eucharistic Prayer provides the proper anamnestic, epicletic, and ecclesial context for the principally Christological words of institution. If attention is given (theologically, ritually, and catechetically) to the entire Eucharistic Prayer, it can truly be experienced as the “center”, the very “heart” of the Mass.

At the same time, sacramental Communion is integrally connected to the great prayer of thanksgiving and consecration, not a rival to it. In fact, sacramental Communion is the summit towards which the central Eucharistic Prayer is directed. In the Communion Procession, the Eucharistic Church encounters the true, real, substantial presence of the risen Lord in a singular and unique way.

In the tradition stemming from Paul’s first letter to Corinth, followed by Augustine, Aquinas, and confirmed by the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council, the *res* of the sacrament of Eucharist, its ultimate purpose, is the unity of the Body of Christ – Head and members. This unity is brought about by the union of each believer with Christ, deepened in a special way by each reception of sacramental Communion.

Chapter One will treat the Eucharistic Prayer from historical, theological, and ritual perspectives. The aim will be to show how the Eucharistic Prayer is rightly the “center” and “heart” of the Mass.

Chapter Two will examine the vital connection between the Eucharistic Prayer and sacramental Communion. We will assert that these two elements of the Mass have a mutual emphasis on the unity of the Body of Christ. We will see how the Eucharistic sacrifice is “wholly directed” towards sacramental Communion.

Chapter Three will conclude that sacramental Communion, specifically the Communion Procession, is the ritual summit of the Eucharist. I will attempt to demonstrate that sacramental Communion is the culmination of the Eucharistic sacrifice, and that the Communion Procession is an icon of the heavenly banquet. The texts of the liturgy itself will confirm that the Eucharist is fundamentally concerned with the unity of the Body of Christ, which is brought about in a special way by sacramental Communion.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER AS "CENTER"

As was noted in the Introduction of this essay, the Eucharistic Prayer is variously described as the “center”, the “heart” of the Mass. This is true not only because the Eucharistic Prayer contains the Institution Narrative and Consecration (the words of Jesus), but because the Eucharistic Prayer provides the proper anamnestic, epicletic, and ecclesial context for the dominical words. Also, the Trinitarian and doxological nature of the Eucharistic Prayer establish it as the central prayer in the Eucharistic liturgy. Just as Jesus prayed “that they all may be one”, the Eucharistic Prayer is also a prayer for *unity*: unity of the Body of Christ – head and members, which comes about principally through the Eucharist, and in a unique way through sacramental Communion.

However, the central role the Eucharistic Prayer plays in the Mass has often been understood only in relationship to the Institution Narrative. For example, in the current *Order of Mass*, rituals accompanying the IN (elevations, genuflections, bells, incensing, postures of ministers, etc.) seem to give a ritual priority to that section of the EP over and against the other sections.⁸ Also, the *ars celebrandi* (the “art of celebrating” the liturgy) can add ritual emphasis to this one section of the EP, isolating it from the entire text of this central prayer of the Mass.

⁸ Throughout this essay, I will abbreviate “Institution Narrative” as “IN” and Eucharistic Prayer as “EP”. Where I want to refer to the words of Christ instituting the Eucharist in a more general way I will do so, so as to distinguish that reference from the proper section of the Eucharistic Prayer as we know it today.

These are the contemporary form of the longstanding ritual expressions of the also longstanding belief in the West that the IN is the “moment of consecration” – the moment when bread and wine are substantially changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. The scholastic era determined that the recitation of the words of Christ was the “form” of the sacrament of the Eucharist, implying to many that the rest of the prayer was less important, or at least functionally distinct.⁹ In fact, Thomas Aquinas states clearly that consecration is effected by the Lord’s words only, but not that the rest of the EP is thereby “less important.”¹⁰ A change was even made between the 1969 version of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (hereafter *GIRM*) and the 1975 edition (because of the so-called Ottaviani Letter) to add the words “*and Consecration*” after the title “Institution Narrative.”

However, contemporary magisterial documents and the tradition of the Church describe the whole EP as the “center”¹¹ of the liturgical celebration and as being the “prayer of thanksgiving *and sanctification*”¹²; the IN is described as “an integral part of the *one continuous prayer of thanksgiving and blessing*.”¹³ As we shall see, the witness of the early Christian liturgical traditions supports the primacy of the entire EP as consecratory. At some point in the early Church, either the question of the “moment” of Eucharistic consecration was asked, and the answer given was the entire *anaphora* (EP), or the question was not asked (which is unlikely given the emphasis of theologians as early as Justin and Irenaeus on the eucharistized bread and wine as being the Body and Blood of Christ.) It is clear from texts, rites, and theology that in the early Church (prior to fixing a “moment of consecration”), the entire anaphora functioned as the central consecratory prayer of the Eucharistic liturgy.

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 78.

¹⁰ Ibid., q. 83, a. 4, ad. 1.

¹¹ *GIRM*, 79.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ USCCB, *Introduction to the Order of Mass* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2003), 119.

In our time, how do we reconcile these conflicting theologies of consecration in the celebration of the Eucharist? What is the “moment” of Eucharistic consecration? How do our liturgical texts reflect this? Does the entire EP have a consecratory nature and value? What do the rituals of the Eucharistic liturgy reveal about our theology of the Eucharist? Do they give undue priority to the IN?

I contend that ritually emphasizing one section (the IN) of the EP is a manifestation of an imbalanced theology of Eucharistic consecration remnant of developments during the Middle Ages and codified in the scholastic era. These theological developments include the reduction of the consecratory nature of the EP into the IN, which led to the aforementioned ritual expressions such as bells, genuflections, incensing, etc.

I would suggest that this theological position is problematic because it sets the Christological aspect of the Eucharist outside of the Trinitarian framework, which leads other fundamental dimensions of the Eucharist - anamnestic, epicletic, ecclesial, eschatological, and doxological – to fall away. I want to maintain, therefore, that the IN *is* consecratory but in the proper context of the entire great prayer of thanksgiving. This approach is distinctly different than attributing consecration only to the whole prayer, and not to the IN. Because the entire EP has a consecratory nature, fidelity to the theological fullness of the entire EP demands that current ritual practices (e.g. ringing bells, incensing, genuflections) and *ars celebrandi* be examined in this light. Also, the theological fullness found in the EP is necessary for asserting the vital link between Eucharistic praying, sacramental Communion, and the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist itself: the unity of the Body of Christ. Because the EP, and the Eucharist itself, is wholly directed towards sacramental Communion, I will assert that while the EP is rightly the “heart” and “center” of the Eucharistic liturgy, sacramental Communion is the ritual “summit.”

In this chapter, we will begin by tracing the history of the relationship between the IN and the entire EP from their pre-Christian Jewish origins until the present day. We will also examine the related development of an emphasis upon “moment of consecration theology” in the West. Next, we will explore the theology of the Eucharist and the EP to affirm the manifold dimensions of the sacrament that preclude any undue emphasis upon the Christological dimension. Finally, we will show that the EP is concerned with unity and that this central prayer of the Mass makes clear that the purpose of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the unity of the Body of Christ.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The aim of this section will be to trace the historical development of the *anaphora*, the central prayer of the Eucharistic liturgy, and the relationship of one particular part - the IN - to the whole prayer from textual, ritual, and theological perspectives. As the Church progressed from the Apostolic to the Scholastic age, how did the text of this Eucharistic prayer change, particularly in light of simultaneous theological developments? To answer that question, we will review how an emphasis on the “moment of consecration” developed within Eucharistic theology. By examining the texts of the prayers (from their Jewish foundations up to the formulation of the Roman Canon) and the concurrent theological developments in the West, we will conclude that it was natural, and in many ways inevitable, to link the “moment” (if there needed to be *one*) with the IN. We will note some of the ritual expressions that developed as a result of this linking. Finally, we will attempt to show that an understanding of these historical developments will support the need for affirming that the IN is, in fact, consecratory, but as an expression of the consecratory nature of the entire EP, the central prayer of the Eucharistic liturgy.

FROM THE JEWISH FESTIVE MEAL TO THE *DIDACHE*

One of the primary sources for the Christian anaphora was the Jewish blessing prayer for a meal, the *birkhat ha-mazon*. This Jewish prayer had three parts: in the first, God is blessed for creating the world; in the second for giving his people food; and in the third, there is a petition for restoring Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, these themes make their way into the earliest Christian prayers.¹⁴ The first-century disciples retained their identity as devout Jews, and would have interpreted Jesus' command to "do this in memory" to mean that they, too, should pray such blessing prayers in his memory. The additional prayers surrounding the *birkhat ha-mazon* for the Passover celebration offer "pre-echoes" of the Christian Eucharist. These prayers, especially the blessings over the cups and unleavened bread, provide the foundations upon which the Christian Eucharist grew.¹⁵ While there is scholarly disagreement on whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal or took place on the night before Passover, the context remains the same – Jesus asserts himself as the new "Passover lamb" and changes the context of the Jewish meal forever.

Because these Jewish blessing prayers were so foundational to the Christian Eucharist, it is important to note their central and singular focus. In these prayers, what is blessed primarily is not the food, the meal, or the people who gathered to eat it. It is *God* who is blessed – for His goodness in creation, for sustaining His people, including (but not limited to) the providence of the food on the table before them.

The New Testament – both in the Gospel accounts and in Paul's first letter to the community at Corinth – provides a minimal witness to early Christian Eucharistic practice. Because of the disparity between the synoptic and the Johannine accounts regarding Passover, and the lack of specific details about the ritual itself, the Gospels provide little

¹⁴ R.C.D. Jasper & G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 8.

¹⁵ Ibid, 8-9.

evidence of the early Eucharistic liturgies, and even less about the texts of the blessing prayers. The words of Jesus in the account of institution are the core of the account found here. However, Enrico Mazza suggests that these accounts only report *what was made new* about what remained a Jewish meal – that Jesus transformed it into the Christian Eucharist. The other aspects of the Jewish meal were taken for granted by first-century Jews, and thus not recorded in the New Testament accounts. Historical-critical scholarship thus suggests that the narrative of institution is recorded in the New Testament not necessarily because of its central place in Eucharistic practice, but rather because it was *new*, and not assumed like the other elements of the Jewish meal.¹⁶ But even in Paul's description of the Eucharist in his writing to the community at Corinth, there is a clear connection between the Eucharist and unity. He writes that just as the loaf of bread used for the Eucharist is "one", those who participate in the Eucharist are together in the one Body of Christ. (I Cor 10:16ff) This theme of Christian unity is found throughout the Pauline writings. .

The *Didache*, an early Church order from the first or second century, offers us a clearer description of early Eucharistic practice. Scholars cannot yet agree on the nature of the service in the *Didache* – it may be an *agape* meal (a meal in a liturgical setting) or a Eucharistic liturgy (which by this point in history had become more separated from the meal itself.) It is possible that part of the text may describe the *agape* meal and part may describe the Eucharist. But, they note that in the first century or even later, the dividing line between *agape* and Eucharist is very fine. And, the Jewish element throughout the whole text of the prayers is very clear, suggesting that these blessing prayers are Christian adaptations of Jewish forms.¹⁷ Enrico Mazza concurs that the rite found in the *Didache* parallels a Jewish

¹⁶ Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, Matthew J. O'Connell, trans. (New York, New York: Pueblo, 1986), 24-25.

¹⁷ Jasper and Cuming, 20-21.

festive meal. The tri-partite structure of thanksgiving over the cup, thanksgiving over the bread, and prayer for unity is the basis of the earliest anaphoras of the Christian communities of the sub-apostolic age.¹⁸ In Chapter 9 of the *Didache*, we find a very early usage of the word “eucharistize” to describe the action of blessing God for his gifts of food and drink, and for Jesus, who is named as the means of revealing the “holy vine of your servant David” and God’s “life and knowledge.”¹⁹

In Chapter 10 of the *Didache*, thanksgiving for the “name” of God is a constant thread throughout the text. Knowing the reverence given to the name of God throughout the history of Israel (as evidenced in the Old Testament), this affirming of the revelation of the divine name in Jesus is a powerful statement. Exodus 20:24 offers this promise regarding God’s name: “In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.” Similarly, Paul quotes the prophet Joel (Joel 3:5) when he writes in his letter to the Romans that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Rom 10:13) The prayers of the *Didache* bless, and attribute sanctifying power to the name of God.²⁰ It is noteworthy that these prayers focus not so much on the narrative of the Last Supper, but on the sanctifying power of the name of God. (We will return to this focus on the name of God in the next section, as we consider the doxological aspect of the Eucharist.)

The background of Jewish festive meals and the texts of the New Testament and the *Didache* evidence that the focus of blessing was God, and that thanksgiving was given for the name of God as revealed in Jesus. Additionally, bread and wine have their place in the meal, but the focus of the Eucharistic texts is not upon them. As Edward Kilmartin states, “food and drink (bread and wine) are made objects of thankful praise because of what God will do

¹⁸ Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 33-34.

¹⁹ *Didache*, ch. 9 in Aaron Milavec, *The Didache* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003)

²⁰ Mazza, *Prayers*, 3.

through them.”²¹ They become a sacramental means of consecration and communion. Bread and wine are also symbolic of the unity of the Body of Christ that we have seen as a focus of both Paul and the *Didache*. The *Didache* connects the broken bread with the unity of the Church: “As this broken bread was scattered over the mountains, and when brought together became one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom...”²²

Our analysis (albeit brief) of early Christian prayer texts from the Jewish festive meals to the *Didache* show that even if the IN was included in the anaphora, it was not the central element. These texts are also far from any emphasis on “consecration” or even concern for *how* the elements of bread and wine will bring about the unity described in the *Didache*. In fact, Robert Taft declares that there is “not a single extant pre-Nicene EP that one can prove contained the Words of Institution.”²³ Even though they may contain no narrative of institution, these primitive texts are Eucharistic – there is a “giving of thanks for redemption through Christ in a rite in which the risen Lord’s presence is mediated through food and drink.”²⁴ And, these early Eucharistic texts begin to make clear that the unity of the Church is the essence of the Eucharist.

THE ENTRY OF THE INSTITUTION NARRATIVE INTO THE ANAPHORA

The question then becomes: how did the narrative of institution not only enter the typical structure of the anaphora, but become its central element? To answer this, we must turn to the liturgical and theological developments of the second, third, and fourth centuries.

²¹ Edward J. Kilmartin, “Sacrificium Laudis: Content and Function of Early EPs” in *Theological Studies* 35 (1974), 273.

²² *Didache*, ch. 9 in Milavec.

²³ Robert F. Taft, “Mass Without the Consecration?” in *Liturgical Renewal as a Way to Christian Unity*, James F. Puglisi, ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 210.

²⁴ Kilmartin, “Sacrificium Laudis...”, 276.

I will attempt to show that the IN entered the anaphora as a type of historical embolism, a way of connecting the anamnestic prayer of the Eucharist to the historical reality of the Last Supper, rather than as a *locus* of Eucharistic consecration. If the teachings of Church fathers such as Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus are any indication, there is little evidence of the IN being understood as the sole locus of Eucharistic consecration.

The liturgical texts, including the anaphoras, of the early Christian communities did not develop in a uniform way. Centers of liturgical influence such as Alexandria, Antioch, and Syria formulated EPs somewhat independently; however, there is evidence of “cross-pollination” of structure, language, and themes. The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus is one representative example that scholars accept as indicative of early Christian eucharistic practice. While scholarship on this early text is ongoing and yields various conclusions, the *Apostolic Tradition* remains a text worthy of our analysis for the insights it provides into the themes of early Christian worship.

In this foundational text, the emphasis is on thanksgiving to God made “through Jesus Christ.” The Father is praised through praising the works of the Son.²⁵ The structure of the prayer is a prototype of the anaphoras in use by the fourth century; it did not include the *Sanctus* (added later) or intercessions (located elsewhere in the liturgy), but did include the preface, IN, anamnesis, epiclesis, and doxology.²⁶ Notably, the narrative is placed at the correct point chronologically – after the recalling of Christ’s ministry (in the preface) and prior to the remembrance of his death and resurrection (in the anamnesis).²⁷ Also interestingly, the epiclesis asks not for the *change* of the elements of bread and wine (a fourth-century emphasis) but only to come upon them for the benefit of the Church, “gathering her

²⁵ Ibid., 278.

²⁶ Jasper & Cuming, 32.

²⁷ Ibid.

into one... for the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of faith in truth.”²⁸ Thus, in neither the IN nor the epiclesis do we find an emphasis on consecration in the way it becomes emphasized in the fourth century; instead there is an emphasis on the unity of the Church, an echo of the *Didache*.

This is not to say that Hippolytus, or those upon whom he relied for his theology (namely Justin and Irenaeus) were not concerned with the change of elements. In fact, Justin affirms that it is the prayer to the Father that occasions the activity of the Logos through whom the elements become the “flesh and blood of the Incarnate Jesus.”²⁹ Also, in Irenaeus, there is a typological emphasis on the Church’s Eucharist in relationship to the Last Supper. Enrico Mazza puts it this way: “The interpretation of the Eucharist by Justin and Irenaeus is not to be confused with a theology of Eucharistic consecration. In Justin, the EP plays a decisive role, not because it consecrates but because it ensures the correspondence of the ‘Eucharistified’ elements with the ‘type’ established by Jesus at the Last Supper. Irenaeus represents the same conception, but at a slightly more advanced stage of development.”³⁰ So, in all three of these Church fathers, we see an emphasis on the consecratory nature of the entire anaphora, and not just on the IN. As Kilmartin puts it: “The prayer itself seems to have been considered to fulfill this function without the need for an explicit petition [either in the IN or the epiclesis.]”³¹

So, then, if it was not added primarily as a consecratory “petition”, why does the narrative account of the Last Supper become a normative, and ultimately central part of the anaphora? Terrance Klein, building on the scholarship of Gregory Dix, Louis Ligier, Cesare Giraudo, and others, suggests that the IN entered the Christian anaphora as a type of

²⁸ Ibid., and Anaphora of the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, as cited in Jasper & Cuming, *Prayers*, 35.

²⁹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 66, in Kilmartin, *TS*, 278.

³⁰ Mazza, *Celebration*, 115.

³¹ Kilmartin, “Sacrificium Laudis...”, 278.

historical *embolism*. He notes a tradition in Jewish blessing prayers of including an embolism – an account of an historical event, such as Passover, Hannukah, Purim, etc. – within the body of the *birkhat ha-mazon* to connect that anamnestic prayer more closely with the historical event being celebrated. In this way, it fulfilled a similar role as the preface of the Roman EPs used today.³² Klein's theory is based not only on the precedent found in Jewish prayers, but on this simple observation: early Christian anaphoras did not *need* an IN – their Eucharistic celebrations took place in a Jewish milieu, not long after the historical Christ-event. As the Christian Eucharist began to take place in the Gentile context also, it became necessary to make it clear (in contrast to Hellenic mystery cults) that the Eucharist was, as Klein says: “a meal dependent upon, and referring back to an actual historical event: the last fellowship meal in which Jesus first announced - albeit in a veiled way, in the form of a prophetic symbol - the coming paschal mystery.”³³ In other words: the first Christian disciples (Jews) knew what they were doing – exactly what Christ did. As the distance from the Last Supper grew (in space, time, and cultural awareness), the IN served the function of grounding the Eucharistic meal in its Christological source. Or, as Giraudo puts it: “The Church dwells on the Lord's insistence [to celebrate the Eucharist] precisely by means of the proclamation of the institution narrative and the subsequent anamnesis.”³⁴ With thanksgiving and blessing God still the starting point, and the anamnestic prayer and petition for unity as the conclusion, the words of Jesus functioned as an historical embolism within the anaphora.

³² Cf. Terrance Klein, “Institution Narratives at the Crossroads”, *Worship* 67 (1993), 407-418.

³³ *Ibid.*, 415.

³⁴ Cesare Giraudo, “Eucharist as Diakonia” in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, ed. Keith Pecklers (New York, New York: Continuum, 2003), 114.

FROM AMBROSE TO AQUINAS

According to Joseph Jungmann in his foundational work *The Mass of the Roman Rite*: “In general, Christian antiquity even until way into the Middle Ages manifested no particular interest regarding the determination of the precise moment of the consecration.”³⁵ Yet, Ambrose of Milan can be described as the father of “moment of consecration” theology. His fourth-century writings became the point of reference in the West regarding the question of when the elements are changed. In his *De Mysteriis*, Ambrose states that “*benedictio consecravit*” – attributing consecratory power to the blessing; it is unclear if he means the IN in a restrictive way, or the entire EP in a broader sense.³⁶ Ambrose does note in the same work that the consecration is effected primarily by the “*sermo Christi*.”³⁷ Later, in *De Sacramentiis*, he attributes consecration to the words of Christ, distinguishing them from the other words spoken by the priest on his own authority; Ambrose is clear to attribute the efficacious power of consecration to Christ alone.³⁸ A contemporary of Ambrose, John Chrysostom, attributed consecratory power to the Holy Spirit, and considered the epiclesis as indispensable for the realization of the Eucharist.³⁹ These contrasting emphases between Eastern and Western Christians remain a point of theological tension to the present day, a point to which we will return later in this essay.

So the question arises: is Ambrose referring to the words spoken by the historical Jesus of Nazareth, or those same words repeated by the priest at every Eucharist? Some 20th century scholars, namely Antoine Chavasse and Yves Congar, have pursued the first option in saying that narrating what Christ did at the Last Supper is primarily a way of participating

³⁵ Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, Vol. II, trans. Francis A. Brunner (New York, New York: Benziger Bros., 1955), 203-204, see note 9.

³⁶ “the blessing consecrated”, Ambrose of Milan, *De Mysteriis* 9:50, as found in Taft, 220.

³⁷ “words of Christ”, Ambrose of Milan, *De Mysteriis*, 9:52, as found in Taft, 220.

³⁸ Ambrose of Milan, *De Sacramentiis*, in Jasper & Cuming, 144-45.

³⁹ John McKenna, *Eucharist and Holy Spirit* (Essex, Great Britain: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1975), 59.

in the once and for all consecration.⁴⁰ They see this as a parallel to God's Word creating the world once and for all, and our participating in that creation. In discussing this idea, Mazza puts it this way: "God's word is efficacious always and for all; therefore it is not repeated, but only commemorated; repetition would imply a lack of efficacy."⁴¹ Robert Taft, in his essay on the recent confirmation of the validity of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, affirms this interpretation of Ambrose by Chavasse and Congar. Taft explains the teaching of Ambrose and Chrysostom in this way: "The Words of Institution are always consecratory, even when they are not recited...not because they are a formula the priest repeats in the Eucharistic Prayer, but because Jesus' pronouncing of them at the Last Supper remains efficaciously consecratory for every Eucharist until the end of time."⁴²

However, it seems that the second option was to become the norm, at least in the West, up until the present day. Jungmann notes that it is Florus Diaconus of Lyons in the ninth century Carolingian period who, as successor to Ambrose, with particular stress brought out the significance of the words of consecration spoken by the priest: "*ille* [the priest] *in suis sacerdotibus quotidie loquitur*."⁴³ And so, by the scholastic period, Peter Lombard and others can state that it is the words of the Lord spoken by the priest *in persona Christi* that have the power of Eucharistic consecration.⁴⁴ Thus, the IN spoken at every Eucharist was *the* moment of consecration, and ultimately (in the Scholastic system) became the essential "form" of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The isolation of, and emphasis on this one section of the anaphora becomes so extreme that theologians such as Sicard of Cremona and Peter Cantor can say that the words of Christ, by themselves, when spoken with intention of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 263, and Cf. Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Volume III (New York, New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 233.

⁴¹ Mazza, *Prayers*, 266.

⁴² Taft, 223.

⁴³ "which he [Christ] speaks daily by virtue of his priests." See Florus of Lyons, *De actione miss.*, c. 60 (PL, 119, 52 f.), noted in Jungmann, II, 204, note 9.

⁴⁴ Mazza, *Prayers*, 261.

consecrating, are enough to effect *transubstantiation* (a term grounded in Aristotelian philosophy, adopted by the Fourth Lateran Council and Aquinas, which the Council of Trent described as “fitting”, yet not “exclusive” to describe Eucharistic consecration.)⁴⁵

Returning for a moment to our study of anaphoral texts, the aforementioned theological developments are supported by the changes to the Eucharistic texts of the same period. In the earliest versions of the Roman Canon, we see that that *Sanctus* is added to the anaphora following the preface. However, there is a concurrent development by which the *sursum corda*-preface-*Sanctus* block is separated from the rest of the Canon, thus moving away from the idea of the thanksgiving as essential to consecration. By the Middle Ages, the canon was regarded as beginning at the *Te igitur*, a rupture which would continue up to the Second Vatican Council.⁴⁶ Jungmann describes this rupture in the “*Canon actionis*” in this way: “At the *Sanctus*, the audible performance breaks off, and all the rest is done in utter stillness, with only the altar boy’s bell to give warning of the elevation of the sacred species, and again the silence resumes.”⁴⁷ Jungmann also notes other ways in which this break was manifest, including the setup of the Mass book and the ornamentation of the first letter of *Te Igitur*.⁴⁸ He summarizes this ritual rupture (entailing theological consequences) by noting that, “The God-ward movement of the great prayer of thanksgiving has been replaced by a reverse movement, turning upon the descent of the sacred mystery, and it is the impetus of this movement, which has determined to a large extent the present pattern of the ancient *Eucharistia*.”⁴⁹ The results of a restored audible proclamation of the entire anaphora over the past forty-five years, and its effect on the “God-ward” movement that Jungmann highly

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Jasper & Cuming, 159.

⁴⁷ Jungmann, 101.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 101.

prized are certainly fodder for scholarly critique and debate (as well as experiential analysis by the faithful.)

In any case, as we have shown, by the scholastic period the final shape of the anaphora, and the linking of the moment of consecration with the IN had been secured. Because of this reduction of the consecratory nature of the anaphora into one of its parts – the IN – various ritual expressions took shape which would continue up until the present day (e.g. genuflections, ringing of bells, incensing, shifts in posture and focus by the priest, etc.)

Other such ritual practices have since passed into obsolescence. There was a practice of not only showing the host (which remains a rubric to this day), but of turning to the left and right, and eventually of kissing the host (likely an outgrowth of the realist/physicist debates of the eleventh century.)⁵⁰ We have evidence from France of a still more dramatic reverence given to the elements within the IN. Beginning in this era, and continuing in some parts of France until the eighteenth century, a black curtain is positioned behind the altar so as to make the white host stand out more clearly.⁵¹

Nathan Mitchell, in his work *Cult and Controversy*, opines that the custom of elevating the host during the EP did not originate primarily as an indication that the consecration had taken place (although this is implied.) Rather it developed after the early years of the thirteenth century, partly because of a desire to see the host (which, Mitchell reminds us, had by now become not something primarily to be eaten, but a cultic object to be revered for its own sake within and outside of Mass) and in light of infrequent Communion by the laity

⁵⁰ Jasper & Cuming, 209 & 212.

⁵¹ Ibid., 211.

(which we will treat more fully in the third chapter.)⁵² Perhaps the most clear indication of the near-total reduction of Eucharistic consecration into the dominical words (and the superstitious attitudes that characterize this era of Eucharistic practice) is that in the fourteenth century, the elevation of the host within the IN was seen as the supreme moment of the liturgy; people felt free to leave after that, and often tried to see multiple elevations in one day.⁵³ This is yet another reason that the EP could be seen as both “center” and “summit” of the Mass. The reception of the consecrated host and wine was no longer seen as the culmination of the Eucharist, and sacramental Communion was no longer as significant moment as the elevation within the Mass.

CONCLUSION

To summarize this historical section, it seems that from the Apostolic to the Scholastic age, the IN - when it finally became a normative part of the anaphora in the fourth century - progressed from functioning as an historical embolism to being the central and focal part of the anaphora. Simultaneously, there was a growing theological interest in determining *how* Eucharistic consecration took place, culminating in the doctrine of transubstantiation.

In the next section I will endeavor to show that the highlighting of the IN as a distinctive element within the entire anaphora and the emphasis on the “moment of consecration” puts the Christological dimension out of balance with the anamnestic, epicletic, and ecclesiological dimensions, and is unfaithful to the Trinitarian framework and doxological nature of the Eucharist. This text, so closely connected with the sanctification of

⁵² Nathan D. Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990) 136, 157.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

the gifts, may lead towards obscuring the sanctification of those who will receive them, and the theme of unity of the Body of Christ. The aforementioned historical developments have shown something of a devolution, the ritual expressions of which linger on in the Church today.

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR THE CENTRALITY OF THE ENTIRE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

In this section of the chapter, we will use the historical development of the IN and of “moment of consecration” theology as a foundation to argue for a theological adjustment – namely, establishing the IN as consecratory, but best seen within its proper context – the entire EP. In accord with our overall thesis, this section will explore the fundamentally Trinitarian, anamnetic, epicletic, ecclesial, and doxological dimensions of the Eucharist, as found in the EP. We will show that these aspects must be balanced with the Christological (expressed both in the preface, but even more so in the IN.) The goal of this theological “repositioning” will be to advocate for the intrinsic value of the EP itself, not just as a beautiful poetic package in which the real “gift” – the presence of Christ, through the words of institution – is wrapped. In examining the various dimensions of the Eucharist to which the EP gives a fuller voice, I will attempt to demonstrate how the unity of the Church is a primary theme, and how the *entire* EP has the sacramental Communion of the faithful in mind.

Kevin Irwin, in his book *Context and Text*, articulates a method for doing liturgical theology. He establishes that liturgy is always anamnetic-Christological, epicletic-pneumatological, and ecclesiological-soteriological.⁵⁴ Adapting Irwin’s model, let us consider

⁵⁴ Kevin Irwin, *Context and Text* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 47-49.

here how the Eucharist, the Church's supreme act of liturgical prayer, is always done remembering and making present what the One-in-Three has done in Christ (Trinitarian-anamnetic), by the power and in the unity of the Holy Spirit (epicletic), by and for the Church and her salvation (ecclesial.) All of this is done to fulfill the chief aim of any liturgical action: the sanctification of the faithful and the praise and glory of God (doxological.)

Building on the framework Irwin has established, I will explore these aspects of the Eucharist, particularly as they are found and expressed in the EP, to establish their relationship with the Christological dimension.

TRINITARIAN-ANAMNETIC

In *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI reflected on the Trinitarian dimension of the Eucharist in these words: "The Eucharist reveals the loving plan that guides all of salvation history. There the *Deus Trinitas*, who is essentially love, becomes fully a part of our human condition. In the bread and wine under whose appearances Christ gives himself to us in the paschal meal, God's whole life encounters us and is sacramentally shared with us."⁵⁵

In the Eucharist, the Church encounters the Trinity in a unique way; in the Eucharist, not only do we share in the divine life, but God Himself deigns to share in our life. While the Eucharist is certainly Christological – a sacramental encounter with God's Word made flesh – we cannot forget that this encounter is essentially Trinitarian. This Word of God, sent by the Father, dwells among us by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christological dimension of the Eucharist is situated within the larger Trinitarian framework.

⁵⁵ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 8.

Enrico Mazza points out that “the Eucharistic Prayer is always and at every point directed to the Father.”⁵⁶ Mazza continues to remind us that Jesus never taught us to pray to anyone but the Father – not even Himself. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed by giving thanks to the Father. He then told His disciples to do the same.⁵⁷ Therefore even when we repeat the words of Jesus and ask for the gift of the Spirit, our prayer is directed to the Father.

Necessarily, the Church experiences God primarily through Christ – who became one like us. Christ is the “image of the unseen God” (Col 1:15) and entered human history as a human being; thus, our knowledge, our experience, our very theology of God is admittedly Christologically conditioned. The Eucharist itself is grounded in the historical reality of Jesus’ table fellowship, particularly with The Twelve on the night before He died. However, what Jesus reveals in the Gospels is that He and the Father are one, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. So, at the risk of oversimplifying the doctrine of the Trinity, to emphasize the power of Christ in the words of institution is to emphasize the power of the Father who sent Him and the Spirit who makes Him present now. “In this sacramental dispensation of Christ’s mystery the Holy Spirit acts in the same way as at other times in the economy of salvation: he prepares the Church to encounter her Lord; he recalls and makes Christ manifest to the faith of the assembly. By his transforming power, he makes the mystery of Christ present here and now.”⁵⁸ Roch Kereszty describes our engagement with God in the Eucharist in these words: “Through Christ, we are actually lifted up into the Father’s presence, the primordial source of Trinitarian life and of salvation history.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Mazza, *Prayers*, 4.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁸ CCC, 1092.

⁵⁹ Roch A. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Perspective* (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand, 2004), 186.

What, then, is the place of salvation history in the Eucharist? Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologiae*, states that “in this sacrament [the Eucharist] is included the whole mystery of our salvation.”⁶⁰ Irwin reminds us, in his book *Models of the Eucharist*, that salvation history, and the Paschal Mystery, for that matter, properly begin with Creation, not only with the Incarnation. Building on the work of Edward Kilmartin and others, Irwin can argue that even the systematic theologians of the high scholastic period had this same basic outlook – that the Word through whom the world was created came in the flesh and gave us the sacraments to draw us into union with Himself. Bread and wine point back to the goodness of creation. God communicates with his creatures in a unique way.⁶¹ Sacramentality presupposes that God, who pronounced creation good, continues to use creation to be present among us.

The EP begins with thanksgiving for this salvation history, beginning with creation. In the many prefaces of the Roman Rite, and even the thanksgiving portion of the EP that continues after the *Sanctus* acclamation and precedes the epiclesis (“We come to you, Father, with praise and thanksgiving...”, etc.) it is clear that the starting point is thanksgiving for the total work of God, manifest in Christ Jesus, through the power of the Spirit. Recalling the scripture, theological tradition, and early anaphoras we studied previously, it is clear that thanksgiving is their central theme. Thus, before we can recall his passion and death, we must recall all that God has done through Christ Jesus – creation *and* redemption - and respond with thankful praise.

This aforementioned “liturgical recollection” is *anamnesis*. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, in describing the parts of the EP, articulates the function of the Anamnesis section in these words: “In which the Church, fulfilling the command that she

⁶⁰ ST, III, q. 83, a. 4.

⁶¹ Kevin Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 45.

received from Christ the Lord through the Apostles, keeps the memorial of Christ, recalling especially his blessed Passion, glorious Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven.”⁶² This section of the EP has its particular place after the “Institution Narrative and Consecration”, and has the function of affirming that the Church, in obedience, is doing “this” in memory of Christ.

By way of historical reference, in the primitive anaphoras considered in the first section, the anamnesis was woven throughout the entire text. Cesare Giraudo has studied these prayers, and pointed out that in these prayers (as well as the contemporary versions), the words of institution are surrounded by what can properly be called anamnesis. Praise and thanksgiving is given to God through the recalling and affirmation of what God has done in salvation history. In this context, the mention of the institution of the Eucharist as an event of salvation history is included by the insertion of the supper narrative.⁶³ All of this leads to the section of the prayer specifically called “anamnesis”, in which we recall particularly Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. This section is intimately connected to the “offering”, made in thanks for all of salvation history, which has to this point been recalled. Without reducing the Eucharist to just “one among many” events in salvation history, the supper narrative is appropriately placed in the progression of God’s saving actions, and is included in the offering.

“Liturgical memorial does not involve repeating or redoing anything from the past.” With these words, Irwin affirms that what happened in the past has saving consequences now and in the future. He points out that words such as “perpetuate” or “re-present” – both at home in the Church’s authentic teaching – are more appropriate ways to understand

⁶² *GIRM*, 79e.

⁶³ Edward Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 328.

memorial or anamnesis.⁶⁴ In the liturgy, then, we are not taken back into history; rather, what God has done in history comes to us.⁶⁵ Irwin also asserts that by doing the Eucharist, we are participating in an “act of memory” in the form of a “lyrical hymn of praise and thanks based on memorial of the great deeds God has done for us and our salvation...” He states: “Thus the Eucharistic prayer is best not regarded as a ‘formula’ that works ‘automatically.’ It is a prayer that acclaims God and draws us into the Eucharistic action and dynamism.”⁶⁶

Therefore, the anamnestic dynamic of the Eucharist is not simply remembering the Last Supper, or even just the words and deeds of Jesus. Alexander Schmemmann puts it this way: “The first thing that is revealed to us about the liturgical remembrance of the last supper in light of the Eucharistic experience is precisely that, being a part of the thanksgiving, it not only is inseparable from the thanksgiving, not ‘isolated’ from it, but only in reference to it, within it, is its true meaning disclosed to us.”⁶⁷ Simply, the remembrance of the Last Supper is to be seen within the context of the thanksgiving for all God’s works that characterizes the EP as a whole. For it was specifically in the Last Supper that Jesus established “a new and everlasting covenant”, between the Redeemer and the redeemed.

Before we leave this section and conclude our examination of the Trinitarian-anamnestic dimension, it is worth pausing and reflecting upon Kilmartin’s poetic distinction between memory and anamnesis, and its connection to the Trinity:

“Memory, as the aptitude to register and conserve events and words, must be distinguished from the desire of God engraven in the creature by the Creator. The profound memory pertains to the order of a movement of the whole of creation toward God. This desire, which awakens the memory of our origin, can be called memory of the heart. This memory of the heart is the source of our innate capacity to be drawn by the Father to return to our living

⁶⁴ Irwin, *Models*, 126.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 133.

⁶⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), 199.

origin. It is grounded on the presence of the Spirit who configures us to God in the likeness of Christ, as children of God.”⁶⁸

The anamnetic dimension of the Eucharist distinguishes it from a mere “memorial service.”

In the Eucharist, we are drawn up into what Kilmartin calls the movement of the whole of creation toward God: the prayer of the Son, directed to the Father, made present by the power of the Spirit, the source of unity both in the Trinity and in the Body of Christ which is the Church.

EPICLETIC

Having established the value of the Trinitarian and anamnetic dimensions of the Eucharist and EP, let us consider the epicletic dimension. Because the Holy Spirit is understood in the theological tradition as the principle of unity between the Father and the Son, there is a theological basis for asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon bread and wine so that they may be changed into the body and blood of the Son. It is the role of the Spirit to make the Son present to the Church in His manifold modes, Eucharistic included. Yet, in the history of the Eucharist in the West, the Holy Spirit has long been less prominent - theologically and devotionally - than the Son in terms of their respective functions in the Eucharist. And, the “two lungs” of the Church – East and West – have long understood the “moment of consecration” differently.

The Council of Nicaea represents a shift in understanding about the agency of God, both in the Incarnation and in the Eucharist. Gregory Dix notes that pre-Nicene theology of the Incarnation regarded it as the effect of a conception of the Virgin by the Logos (Son,

⁶⁸ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 306-7.

Word), rather than by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ This interpretation, Dix points out, is used by “all the anti-Arian stalwarts, Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, and Gregory Nazianzene...”⁷⁰ However, we find in Cyril of Jerusalem a Eucharistic rite from Jerusalem dating to A.D. 347, which attributes agency in the Eucharist to the Holy Spirit, but not as a result of the Nicene formulation. Dix points out that Cyril’s petition for consecration is explicitly based not on a parallel with the Incarnation, but on a theological theory about the office and mission of God the Holy Spirit in Himself.⁷¹ Thus, there arises a question in the fourth century, regarding the agency of the Holy Spirit in both the Incarnation and the Eucharist. Following Cyril’s lead, this emphasis on the agency, the mission of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist is the seed of the Eastern theology which assigns the epiclesis as the “moment of consecration.”

This point of disagreement between East and West as regards the “moment” and agency of Eucharistic consecration remains in the background of discussions between the Churches. However, the highly Christological tradition in the West would not permit us to simply adopt the Eastern formulation as a replacement for our current doctrine. We would still be focused on a “moment,” just a different one. We would still be emphasizing the agency of one person of the Trinity over and against the others. It seems that to reconcile these conflicting theologies of Eucharistic consecration, a solution in which either East or West “gives up” is untenable. Rather, an increased understanding by both “lungs of the Church” about the consecratory nature of the entire EP could be the “middle ground” on which both parties could stand, while retaining their distinct ways of articulating how that consecration is most clearly expressed. Robert Taft calls these “irreducible local differences

⁶⁹ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Glasgow, Scotland: Maclehose, 1945), 276.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 277.

in the liturgical expression of...the fully reconcilable teaching of both East and West on the Eucharist: that the gifts of bread and wine are sanctified via a prayer, the anaphora, which applies to the present gifts of bread and wine what Jesus handed on.”⁷² One could interpret the newest EPs of the Roman Rite, following the Second Vatican Council, and their textual emphasis on the agency of the Holy Spirit as a move towards this middle ground, this reconciliation. In fact, Kevin Irwin even notes the addition of “the power of the Holy Spirit” to the *GIRM* 2002 description of the Epiclesis section of the EP, and identifies it as “an important phrase that can serve ecumenical relations in terms of the role of the Spirit in enacting the Eucharist...”⁷³

In these post-conciliar EPs, which are structurally similar to early anaphoras from Antioch and Alexandria, there is a “second epiclesis” (which is unfortunately not labeled as such) following the IN. In addition to the “first epiclesis” before the IN, which asks the Father to send the Spirit to “hallow these gifts” and transform them, this second epiclesis asks that communicants may be filled with the Holy Spirit, and that the Church “may become one body, one spirit in Christ.”⁷⁴ In other words, the epiclesis asks that the fullness of the Spirit may bring communion with Christ. Mazza points out that in John’s Gospel, when Jesus dies he “gives up his Spirit” and hands it on to the Church. This Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and preserves among the disciples the same union that existed among the immediate followers of Christ – “one heart and soul.”(Acts 4:32)⁷⁵ This second epiclesis gives voice to the belief that sharing in the body and blood of Christ is not primarily a personal encounter, but rather a sharing in and simultaneously being joined to the mystical body of Christ – the Church, in whom is operative that same principle of unity that is

⁷² Taft, 223.

⁷³ Irwin, *Models*, 280.

⁷⁴ Eucharistic Prayer III, Roman Missal, ICEL translation.

⁷⁵ Mazza, *Prayers*, 141-2.

between Father and Son – namely, the Holy Spirit. We will examine these so-called “communion epicleses” in more detail in the next chapter.

Thus, the epicletic dimension of the Eucharist and the EP (thankfully renewed in the Roman Rite in recent years) is fundamental. It is cooperative with, not competitive with, the Christological. With the Word, the Spirit is operative in the Eucharist, sanctifying the gifts and unifying those who eat and drink them; this principle of unity is the reason for the Eucharist.

ECCLESIAL

Alexander Schmemmann, interpreting Irenaeus of Lyons, offers this powerful statement about the relationship of the Eucharist to the Church: “Everything pertaining to the Eucharist pertains to the Church, and everything pertaining to the Church pertains to the Eucharist, and is tested by this interdependence.”⁷⁶ DeLubac and other theologians have explored the ways in which the “Eucharist makes the Church” and how the “Church makes the Eucharist.” In fact, in the early Church, when speaking of the “body of Christ”, the first meaning was the Church; the term “mystical body” referred to the sacrament. Only with the Eucharistic controversies of the Middle Ages did these terms switch in meaning, yet remain closely related.

John Paul II, in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, writes “The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, *stands at the center of the Church’s life*.”⁷⁷ The Eucharist confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Schmemmann, 215.

⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2003), 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 22.

There is much that could be said about the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church – causal, interdependent, vital, inseparable. Yet, there are a few points that will support the aim of this section of the essay – that of balancing the Christological with the ecclesial in the EP.

The Eucharist is first and foremost an action of Christ. Yet, it is the *Christus totus* that is involved in the Eucharist: the mystical body – head and members. The ordained priest acts *in persona Christi capitis ecclesiae* in his presidency of the Eucharist – in the person of Christ the Head of the Church. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger describes the relationship between specifically the words of institution and the ordained minister this way:

In order that what happened *then* may become present *now*, the words 'This is my body - this is my blood' must be said. But the speaker of these words is the 'I' of Jesus Christ. Only he can say them; they are *his* words. No man can dare to take to himself the 'I' and 'my' of Jesus Christ - and yet the words must be said if the saving mystery is not to remain something in the distant past.⁷⁹

Even if (as some would argue) the priest's role in speaking the dominical words is seen as different from his role in speaking the rest of the EP, that distinction is part of his larger role of presiding in the person of Christ the Head of the Church. Thus, as we have outlined above, the focus on the elements of bread and wine must be seen in relation to its ultimate purpose – the unity of the Church. The epicletic texts express this “ultimate purpose” of both the consecrated food and the Church's prayer. This emphasis on unity goes back, as we have seen, to the *Didache* and the other early anaphoras.

The inseparable connection between Christ and the Church is further expressed in the section of the EP entitled “Intercessions.” In it, the Church joins Christ in imploring the Father for her needs and the needs of the world. Included in these prayers are the Church,

⁷⁹ Joseph M. Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, Graham Harrison, trans. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), 94-95.

her leaders, her people. Far from being tangential to the celebration of the Eucharist, these are the objects, along with bread and wine and the communicants, of transformation.

As another aspect of the ecclesial dimension of the EP, there is always reference to the Communion of Saints: this is part of the eschatological dynamic. The Church on earth joins the Church in heaven in the Eucharistic action, another dimension of the unity that the Eucharist brings about. This is expressed first by the inclusion of the *Sanctus* as an acclamation to the Preface. The eschatological dimension is also expressed explicitly by the inclusion of the Blessed Virgin, patronal saints, and “all the saints” in the list of those through whom intercession is made. These are but two examples of the eschatological aspect of the Eucharist, which is so closely related to the ecclesial. Even in the section properly called “Anamnesis” we not only remember, but also look forward to Christ’s coming again “in glory.” As Irwin states: “Like all Christian theology, eschatology concerns the community of the church and how the church should live here and now. This is to say that there is always an eschatological edge, an eschatological challenge...”⁸⁰ In the Eucharist, we hunger for what is beyond the here and now; our focus is not only upon this church, this altar, this food, but also upon the heavenly banquet. And, as Irwin succinctly puts it: “the Eucharist is both ‘the future present’ and also the present lived in the sure hope that the kingdom will come and we will be called to meet the Lord in the kingdom of heaven.”⁸¹ Therefore, to overemphasize the historical dimension of the Eucharist by means of emphasizing the words of institution is to under appreciate both the ecclesial and the eschatological dimensions.

⁸⁰ Irwin, *Models*, 203.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

DOXOLOGICAL

It is in the conclusion of the EP that the movement of this unified text comes to a climax. Mazza says: "Not only is the doxology the high point of the anaphora insofar as the latter is a proclamation and profession of faith, it also climaxes the sanctificatory movement of the anaphora, since in it the divine name is formally proclaimed in its fullest and most explicit form."⁸² The doxological conclusion includes all the dimensions we have considered thus far. The Eucharist is done "through, with, and in" Christ – head and members – in prayer to the Father "in the unity of the Holy Spirit." "All glory and honor" is clearly given to the one who creates, governs, and sustains all things, "forever and ever." Here, the Christological, Trinitarian, ecclesial, epicletic, anamnestic, and eschatological are synthesized into one clear statement about how God acts in salvation history, in the Paschal Mystery, and in the Eucharist. God's power and glory is acclaimed, and in a sense, God is most fully *named* by this doxological statement.

As noted in the previous section, the *Didache* and other early Eucharistic texts contained an emphasis on thanksgiving for the "name" of God, continuing this veneration as evidenced in the Old Testament. This focus upon the sanctifying power of the name of God in the doxology of the EP seems to be both historically grounded, and theologically sound. It is this doxological statement about God, and the subsequent "Amen" by the people of God, which bring this one, unified, consecratory prayer to its conclusion. To highlight any one part within the EP is to reduce the integrity of the whole. To focus on any one of these dimensions is to devalue the others. Mazza concludes by saying "that the anaphora has an intrinsic sanctifying function precisely because it is a proclamation of the name...from this we also see the meaning of the solemn elevation of the bread and wine

⁸² Mazza, *Prayers*, 3.

during the doxology: it is a proclamation of the name by a gesture.”⁸³ Because our overall thesis is to move away from such a highlighting or emphasis on any one “moment”, I will stop short of proposing that the doxology would be a more appropriate, more theologically sound alternative “moment of consecration.” Yet, emphasis (ritual or catechetical) on the doxology as the conclusion of the entire central EP, and the subsequent “Amen” of the people, is appropriate and possibly advantageous.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter on the centrality of the Eucharist Prayer has attempted to show that the consecratory IN must always be considered in its proper context, that of the entire EP. We have seen evidence of this in early liturgical texts, and any undue emphasis on the Institution Narrative is part of a Western theological movement remnant of the scholastic era. Theologically, the Christological dimension of the Eucharistic Prayer (most clearly expressed in the Institution Narrative) is best seen within the larger dynamic of the Trinitarian, anamnestic, epicletic, ecclesial, eschatological, and doxological dimensions of the prayer. Because of the theological fullness found in the EP, it is clearly the “heart” and “center” of the Eucharistic liturgy.

We have begun to see that the EP, like all dimensions of the Eucharist, is concerned with unity. We will revisit this issue in subsequent chapters. At this point, we can safely state that this great prayer of thanksgiving gives voice to the belief of the Church that it is through Communion in the Body and Blood of Jesus, especially by sharing in sacramental Communion that we are made one in Christ: Head and members.

⁸³ Ibid., 4.

CHAPTER TWO:

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYING AND EUCCHARISTIC COMMUNION

In the preceding chapter, we affirmed the centrality of the EP in the Mass. I advocated for the value of the entire EP, not just the IN. This entire great prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification is concerned primarily with the unity of the Body of Christ, the ultimate purpose of the sacrament of the Eucharist itself. Sacramental Communion is a privileged, singular, unique way of participating in the Eucharist, and bringing this unity about.

In accord with the overall thesis of this project, in this chapter I will treat the connections between the EP and sacramental Communion to demonstrate a vital link, which is in need of additional theological development, as well as ritual attention and catechetical emphasis. I believe that such theological, ritual, and catechetical efforts would lead to enhanced understanding of and appreciation for both the EP and sacramental Communion, as well as deepen the full, conscious, and active participation in the Eucharist called for by the Second Vatican Council.

This chapter will serve as a “bridge” to the final chapter, in which I will assert that sacramental Communion - specifically the Communion Procession - is properly described as the ritual “summit” of the Mass, and is integrally connected to the EP, not a rival to it. Both of these critical elements of the Eucharistic liturgy are connected by the central theme of the Eucharist itself: the unity of the Body of Christ.

We will begin with some reflection on the shape of the Eucharist, and how the EP and sacramental Communion fit in that paradigm. We will consider the theological significance of the various rituals of the modern Roman Rite that serve as the ritual “bridge” between the EP and the Communion Rite. Finally, we will examine the value of the “communion epicleses” of the post-conciliar EPs, as examples of Eucharistic praying that articulate the connection between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion; these texts also serve to highlight the purpose of the Eucharist: the unity of the Body of Christ, which is brought about principally through sacramental Communion.

THE SHAPE OF THE EUCHARIST

The connections between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic communion are clearer when we view the Eucharistic liturgy as a comprehensive action. Jesus’ command to “do this in memory of me” included the whole scope of his saving work at the Last Supper: not just eating the meal, but first blessing God. The Eucharist as sacramental sacrifice is more than just a “fraternal banquet”, and it is more than just a litany of verbal statements. The Eucharist is effective because it corresponds to the actions of Christ and fulfills His command to remember Him in this way. The EP leads to sharing in the Eucharistic food.

Gregory Dix’ landmark work, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, brought forward a fundamental insight about the Eucharist. He asserts that Eucharistic liturgies of all eras, all traditions, all varieties and rites, have a common fourfold shape. This shape corresponds with the actions of Christ in 1) *taking* bread and wine, 2) *blessing* God, 3) *breaking* the eucharistized bread, and 4) *giving* or *sharing* blessed bread and wine.⁸⁴ Dix explains the significance of his project in these words:

⁸⁴ For a comprehensive treatment of this fourfold shape, see Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

The eucharist is here the vital expression towards God of what the church fundamentally is, a corporate 'holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' If such a conception of the rite as a united and uniting action towards God of the whole church is to be realized...if the whole eucharist is essentially one action, the service must have a logical development as one whole, a thrust toward that particular action's fulfillment...it must express clearly by the order and connection of its parts what the action is which it is about, and where the service as a whole is 'going'. It is this logical sequence of parts coherently fulfilling one complete action which I call the 'Shape' of the Liturgy...It is the sequence of the rite – the Shape of the Liturgy – which chiefly performs the eucharistic action itself, and so carries out the human obedience to the Divine command 'Do this'.⁸⁵

The Eucharistic liturgy has ritual and theological integrity when it follows this basic pattern; as we will see, extracting parts from the whole does not fully conform to the actions or command of Christ. Exaggerating one part over the other, or reducing the participation of the assembly in one part or the other, is problematic for similar reasons.

Since the publication of Dix' work scholars have debated and critiqued his project. Some argue that there is really a ninefold shape.⁸⁶ Some argue that Dix has overly simplified the nature of early Christian rituals. Some object that all four actions are given equal weight, despite the fact that Dix does not claim this.⁸⁷ Paul Bradshaw has demonstrated the pluriform nature of early eucharistic rites and rejects Dix' consolidation of them, as well as Dix' assertion that all early rites strictly followed the same shape as that given by Christ. Bradshaw writes: "Why then should the early Christians have felt bound to follow in exact detail in their weekly community meals together the description of what Jesus did at what was allegedly the special annual event of the Passover meal? Even if they thought that Jesus

⁸⁵ Dix, *Shape*..., 2.

⁸⁶ Cf. Bryan Spinks, "Mis-shapen. Gregory Dix and the Four-Action Shape of the Liturgy", *Lutheran Quarterly Review* 4 (1990): 167.

⁸⁷ This is another criticism of Spinks, when he suggests that Dix has unduly exalted the offertory and fraction rites. In his introduction to the 2005 printing of *The Shape*..., Simon Jones points out that despite being weighed down by doctrinal and liturgical controversies, the first and third dominical action cannot be removed from the overall "shape", even if their function is more utilitarian than essential. Jones points out: "It is not possible to give thanks over bread and wine unless they have been taken; nor can bread be distributed unless it has been broken." (xix)

had said, 'Do this in remembrance of me', they did not necessarily interpret this to mean, 'Do this, *in exactly the same order*, in remembrance of me'. It is more likely that they understood the command to mean that whenever they ate a ritual meal together, whatever form it took, they were to eat and drink in remembrance of him."⁸⁸

As well, the Eucharist is not simply a re-enactment of the Last Supper: it is the re-presentation of the Passion, truly of the entire Paschal Mystery. In Dix' words, "the last supper of our Lord with His disciples is the source of the liturgical eucharist, but not the model for its performance. For the last supper was not strictly a eucharist, but its prophecy and promise, its last rehearsal."⁸⁹ Admittedly, there is tension between understanding the Eucharist as "sacrifice" and "meal" – I will treat this issue a bit more fully in the final chapter of this essay. For now, let us hold these two concepts together, letting them inform one another, and seeing the fourfold shape in light of their complementarity.

With some notable exceptions (and the hesitancy of some to whole-heartedly endorse his equation of the first action with the liturgical offertory) the majority of scholars endorse the four-action shape. Despite all its criticism and the many advances that have resulted from this work, Dix offers us a basic way of thinking about the Eucharist. He says of the fourfold shape of the liturgy that it "constituted the absolutely invariable nucleus of every eucharistic rite known to us throughout antiquity from the Euphrates to Gaul."⁹⁰ This fourfold shape is worthy of our reflection here, in light of what it reveals about the connections between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic communion.

⁸⁸ Paul Bradshaw, "Did the early Eucharist ever have a sevenfold shape?," *Heythrop Journal* 43, no. 1 (Jan 2002): 73.

⁸⁹ Dix, *Shape...*, 48, 75.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

TAKE

When Jesus *takes* bread and wine, He institutes a new sign, a new ritual, a new way of remembering all that He did, all that He is. Jesus means to use the elements of the created world to represent, indicate, truly *become* Himself. It is through a meal – blessing and sharing together – that Christ intends for his sacrifice to be perpetuated. For this meal, He uses staples of the Mediterranean diet: bread and wine, which have both a nutritive and a symbolic function.

To begin, as Philippe Rouillard has duly noted, bread and wine are not natural products in and of themselves, as are water, plants, fruit. Bread and wine require processing by humans; they are manufactured products, made by humans for human use.⁹¹ Thus, in the prayers of the current rite of the Preparation of Altar and Gifts, these foodstuffs are described as both “fruit of the earth (vine)” and “work of human hands.” Bread and wine were certainly staples of the Mediterranean diet, but they also have symbolic meaning. Jesus’ use of bread and wine in a sacred meal was not an innovation: various peoples (including the Greeks of Jesus’ time) already combined bread and wine in sacrifices to the gods. Jewish practice offers an immediate precedent: God is blessed in the prayers spoken over bread and wine at solemn meals. As Rouillard says: “In instituting his Eucharist during the course of a Jewish religious meal, Christ conformed to this usage already charged with human and sacred values.”⁹²

What is important for our purposes here is both the meal context and that Jesus *takes* into “His sacred hands” the material of His creation and transforms it into something entirely different, something “otherly other.” The otherwise “profane” becomes “sacred.”

⁹¹ Philippe Rouillard, “From Human Meal to Christian Eucharist” in *Living Bread, Saving Cup*, Kevin Seasoltz, ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 128-129.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 131.

The Creator *takes* creation back, claiming it for use in the redemption He will undertake. Additionally, the elements of bread and wine are the products of human labor: we participate in this tangible, real way by offering the “work of human hands.” Many have critiqued any emphasis on the bread and wine as symbolic of human labor and life. Yet, as Simon Jones states in his introduction to the 2005 printing of *The Shape...*: “As the offertory prayers of the modern Roman Rite make clear, the gifts are not offered by men and women as symbolic representations of their life and work before they are first acknowledged to have been given to humanity through the goodness and generosity of God the creator.”⁹³ This aspect of Eucharist as offering is most prominent in the EP itself, where the offered objects will ultimately become the sacrificial meal.

BLESS

After *taking* the bread and wine, Jesus *blesses* God. Just as in the Jewish festive meals, the blessing prayers are spoken over bread and wine, but the food is not the focus, or even emphasized. Jesus blesses *God* for all of God’s goodness: He gives thanks to the Father, even in the face of death. Jesus constantly gave thanks to the Father. Think, for example, of the “Johannine thunderbolt” in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 11:25-27) or the healing miracles or the agony in the garden, to name but a few examples. This intense communion with the Father is what makes Jesus more than simply a great religious leader, or a first among equals. His perfect union with the Father, and witness of constantly *blessing* God by giving thanks, is one major argument in support of his divinity.⁹⁴ Jesus wants to show us that our lives are to be about gratitude: we should always be *blessing* God, above all for the gift of Jesus.

⁹³ Simon Jones, in the introduction to 2005 printing of Dix, *Shape...*, xxii.75

⁹⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Adrian J. Walker, trans. (New York, New York: Doubleday, 2007) – this is the Holy Father’s major theme, and a key affirmation of Jesus’ divine nature.

Since the first chapter of this essay dealt primarily with the EP, my comments here are brief. Our analysis below of the communion epicleses of the post-conciliar prayers will help reinforce that the *blessing* is united with the *sharing*. The reception of sacramental Communion is part of the larger continuous action of *Eucharistia*. The EP is wholly directed towards the Communion of the faithful.

BREAK

Jesus then *breaks* the bread which has been "Eucharistized." Jesus does not consume it all Himself, but rather *breaks* it into pieces so that all of the disciples can eventually share in the meal. In his book *The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays*, James Dallen writes, "this breaking of the loaf of blessed bread 'dramatizes' the life of sharing to which Jesus' disciples are called."⁹⁵ Dallen also notes that the Jewish context in which the Last Supper takes place does not wed the notion of breaking the bread to the "brokenness" of Jesus' crucified body: *breaking* bread was not expressly intended to represent Jesus' death. It would be later allegorical interpretations of the Eucharist which would link this ritual action with the realization of sacrifice.⁹⁶ As Dallen says: "This is not to deny that Jesus' death is sacrifice; what is required is a more adequate understanding of sacrifice and a clarification of how sacrificial imagery has been used to refer to the death of Jesus...the fact that cult language ('sacrifice') was used to refer to what was *not* cult (Jesus' death) means that the liturgical usage of sacrificial language must lead participants beyond ritual to a way of life."⁹⁷ All this is to say that *breaking* the bread is best understood as flowing from the blessing that precedes it

⁹⁵ James Dallen, *The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays* (Chicago, IL: LTP, 1997), 98.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

into the sharing which will follow, rather than as some independent rite open for exaggerated emphasis or interpretation.

GIVE/SHARE

The fourfold action of Jesus comes to completion in the *giving* or *sharing* of the blessed bread and wine. Even a cursory look at the Gospels shows how Jesus' ministry included meals: with the poor, the outcast, with the multitudes, with his friends. Again, the Creator takes the created and makes bread and wine food for the spiritual journey. It is by *sharing* in this meal that Jesus' followers would remember Him; it is by *sharing* in this meal and their love for one another (Jn 13:35) that others would recognize them as his disciples. As I noted earlier, the Eucharist is not simply a matter of reciting texts. As Dix has aptly shown, the Eucharist has a shape that culminates in the *sharing* of bread and wine that is *taken, blessed, and broken*. Dallen says it well: "Entering fully into Christ's destiny and self-offering requires sharing the meal, for the sacrament – dining together – is not finished until it is shared."⁹⁸ Pope Benedict, writing some twenty years before he would be elected pope, takes up the issue of Jesus' union with the Father and our sharing in that union through Communion. He quotes Hans Urs von Balthasar, who says: "*Eucharistia* means thanksgiving. How wonderful that Jesus gives thanks by endlessly offering himself and making a gift of himself to God and to men! Whom does he thank? Most certainly, he thanks God the Father, the model and ultimate source of all giving... But he surely also thanks the poor sinners who are willing to receive him, who let him enter under their unworthy roof."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ibid., 96.

⁹⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, as found in Joseph Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, Brian McNeil, trans. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2008), 74-75.

As we have seen, when this fourfold Eucharistic action is complete, unbroken, and continuous, it conforms most fully to Jesus' own Eucharistic actions and His command to "do this in memory" of Him. In this case, the connections between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic communion are evident, and there is an inherent logical progression. However, the ways in which we celebrate the Eucharist do not always enable such clarity. When there is imbalance or separation or exaggerated emphasis or limited participation in any of the four elements of the overall Eucharistic action, the theological integrity suffers. How do we celebrate the fourfold Eucharistic action? Is it clear that it forms a theological whole? Does it clearly demonstrate the connections, especially between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic communion? There are certainly implications to our liturgical practice. Both the rubrics of the missal itself, and *ars celebrandi* require attention on the part of both priest and people.

LITURGICAL ISSUES

One liturgical problem with the Preparation Rite is that of other items being included among the "gifts" to be presented: while flowers, pictures, and other mementos can symbolize our experience, our lives, or people themselves, it is bread and wine that Christ has chosen by which to unite us to Himself through the Eucharistic sacrifice.

While it remains a rite that is "preparatory" to the EP, this rite deserves to be done well. Gifts should be presented in a dignified manner, by members of the community: a merely functional carrying by a server or the priest himself from the credence table does not suffice, especially on Sunday. The preparations of the altar table, mixing of water and wine, etc. are not presidential functions – they are the role of the deacon (and some of these duties are done by a lay minister in a deacon's absence.) The presider comes to the altar after the table is set and the vessels are prepared, in order to offer the simple prayers (greatly

simplified in the Missal of Paul VI) of this ritual element. The use of incense can also add solemnity to these gifts that were first the “fruit of the earth (or vine) and the work of human hands.”

Attention to the rubrics of the Preparation of the Gifts would reveal that during what are commonly referred to as the *Berakah* prayers, the presider is to hold the paten, and then chalice, “slightly raised above the altar.”¹⁰⁰ Whereas in the Missal of Pius V (the “Tridentine Mass”) during what was called the Offertory, the priest was explicitly directed to make a gesture of offering, the Missal of Paul VI directs the priest not to “offer” but to simply hold the gifts slightly above the altar. This is faithful to the post-Conciliar emphasis on the offering which takes place, above all, in the EP itself; this is made unclear when the prayers of the preparation rite (which are intended to be inaudible) are proclaimed while gifts are raised as high as possible.¹⁰¹

After the Preparation Rite is concluded, the presider invites the assembly, in the Preface Dialogue, to join him in giving thanks and praise to God. From the outset, this dialogue makes clear that this prayer is the work of the entire assembly, and that the purpose is thanksgiving, which is “right and just.” As the first chapter of this work has clearly shown, this consecratory prayer of praise and thanksgiving is the center and heart of the Eucharistic liturgy. It deserves clear, prayerful, and deliberate recitation so that it “lives up to its billing” in the *GIRM*: “The Eucharistic Prayer demands that all listen to it with reverence and in silence.”¹⁰² This would seem to demand of the presider that he spend time familiarizing himself with the texts, even to the point of memorization. In addition, the presider must

¹⁰⁰ *Order of Mass*, Roman Missal.

¹⁰¹ John Baldovin, “*Accipit Panem*: The Gestures of the Priest at the Institution Narrative of the Eucharist” in *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith*, Nathan D. Mitchell and John F. Baldovin, eds. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 124-5.

¹⁰² *GIRM*, 78.

proclaim the text at a pace that will foster attentive and active listening. One inappropriate method is to race through the prayer as quickly as possible, in an attempt to either expedite the liturgy, or to downplay the privileged role of the presider as proclaimer (as if participation meant everyone had to be *doing* or *saying* something all the time.)

Equally lamentable is the practice of employing a drastically different pace during the IN than during the balance of the prayer. Granted, the *Order of Mass* directs that the words of institution be spoken “distinctly and clearly”, because of the Western tradition that these are the words of consecration. However, as Paul Turner points out: “This instruction applies to the entire IN, not just to the quotations of the words of Jesus. Of course, the entire prayer should be pronounced distinctly and clearly.”¹⁰³ In fact, the U.S. bishops affirm the place of the IN within the entire EP in their *Introduction to the Order of Mass* by saying: “This narrative is an integral part of the one continuous prayer of thanksgiving and blessing. It should be proclaimed in a manner that does not separate it from its context of praise and thanksgiving.”¹⁰⁴

There are implications to the rituals of the Breaking of the Bread and the Communion Rite, but these will be addressed later in this essay. What I have endeavored to demonstrate in this last section is that within this fourfold shape of the Eucharistic action, there is a logical and theological integrity and wholeness. When there is imbalance or exaggerated emphasis, the total Eucharistic action is harder to distinguish. When one element is separated from the others (in the case of a Eucharistic liturgy where only the priest communicates, or a weekday “Communion service”) the Eucharist is less identified as conforming to the command of Christ. *Taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing* are the

¹⁰³ Paul Turner, *Let Us Pray: A Guide to the Rubrics of Sunday Mass* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 115.

¹⁰⁴ *Introduction to the Order of Mass*, 119.

Eucharistic tasks that Jesus commands us to do in His memory.¹⁰⁵ This is the way in which the “Eucharist makes the Church.” Dallen says it well:

“It is the celebration of the eucharist, not the reception of communion, that continues to establish and maintain the reality of the church. Those who have been, and commit to being, identified with Christ, do as he did: They take the bread and cup, bless God, and share the bread and cup. In so doing, they memorialize – become present to and are caught up in the reality of – Jesus’ meals during his ministry, his Last Supper and the meals his disciples continued to share with him after Easter. They have communion with Jesus’ person and with God’s redemptive action, not merely through the reality of Jesus’ presence in ‘transubstantiated’ bread and wine but through the reality of his presence in the total reality of the eucharistic *action*: taking, blessing, giving and receiving in a mutual sharing.”¹⁰⁶

In this fourfold shape, it is clear that the EP and Eucharistic communion are integrally connected. This connection is expressed quite clearly in the EP itself, as the next section of this chapter will demonstrate.

COMMUNION EPICLESSES: A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING

One of the significant fruits of the Second Vatican Council was the addition of more EPs to the Roman Missal. Largely based on prayers of the early Church, these “new” EPs articulate different aspects and dimensions of the Paschal Mystery, and so engage the worshipping community more fully in the tasks of thanksgiving and anamnesis. In particular, the so-called “communion epicleses” which follow the IN in these newer prayers are a fine example of how the *lex orandi* of the Church corresponds to the *lex credendi*. In other words, these texts give voice to a fuller understanding of Eucharist.

Specifically, the communion epicleses are an important part of the Church’s euchology for several reasons. First, they give expression to the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist: the unity of the Body of Christ. Second, they help articulate the distinct actions of

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *GIRM*, 72.

¹⁰⁶ Dallen, 77-78.

the three persons of the Trinity in the Eucharist. Finally, the communion epicleses help to reinforce that the Eucharist is a sacrificial meal, and make clear the vital link between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion. This section of the essay will trace the development of the communion epiclesis, and show how it fulfills the aforementioned functions in the anaphora. My conclusion then will be that the epicletic language found in these prayers provides a basis for further theological reflection and catechetical emphasis upon these key aspects of the Eucharist: prayer, communion, and unity.

ORIGINS & FUNCTION

In liturgical terminology, an *epiclesis* is an invocation, a request that the person being invoked would be present to the thing upon which he/she was being invoked.¹⁰⁷ In fact, the word “epiclesis” has been at various times used more broadly to describe the whole EP, rather than just one section thereof. Scholarship on the early Christian anaphoras has shown that epicletic prayer over time has appealed for different things: the *Logos*, the Spirit, consecration of bread and wine, sanctification, unity and resurrection of communicants, faith, truth, and more.¹⁰⁸ The word “epiclesis” is now applied to the genre of prayer that appeals to the Father to send the Spirit for transformation – consecration and/or sanctification (a key distinction we will discuss below.)

Epicleses are now found in all sacramental rites (the blessing of baptismal water, ordination prayers, etc.) as well as in all post-conciliar EPs. John McKenna succinctly describes the fully developed Eucharistic epiclesis as having three facets: 1)an appeal for the Holy Spirit, 2)to transform or sanctify bread and wine, 3)so that they may benefit those who

¹⁰⁷ John McKenna, *The Eucharistic Epiclesis: A Detailed History from the Patristic to the Modern Era* (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand, 2009), 105.

¹⁰⁸ See a most thorough examination of the epicleses in early anaphoras found in McKenna, 40-41.

partake of them worthily.¹⁰⁹ In these new anaphoras, the epiclesis is split – language before the words of institution asks for the consecration of bread and wine, and language afterwards concerns the sanctification of those who will receive the consecrated gifts.¹¹⁰

An examination of early EPs reveals that the initial purpose of the epiclesis was an appeal for *sanctification*, through communion among those who partake in the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ. We have seen, and will revisit this emphasis below when we examine the *Didache*, the *Apostolic Tradition*, and other early Eucharistic texts. It seems that only later did the focus of the epiclesis move away from *sanctification* of the communicants, and towards the *consecration* of the bread and wine.

THE ROMAN CANON AND THE “MOMENT OF CONSECRATION”

To appreciate the value of the communion epiclesis in the post-conciliar anaphoras, one must start with the Roman Canon and its lack of an explicit epiclesis. We treated the “moment of consecration” in the first chapter of this essay, but because this theological datum has been a lens for interpretation of Eucharistic texts, this issue merits further treatment here also.

The Roman Canon (now known as EP I since 1969) served as the only anaphora in the Roman Rite for nearly 1,500 years leading up to Vatican II. On the one hand, as Kevin Irwin states, “the fact that the Roman Canon has been the single eucharistic prayer prayed in Western Catholicism since the fifth century means that it should be respected as truly revered and formative of countless generations of those who prayed it and those who

¹⁰⁹ McKenna, 105.

¹¹⁰ The motivation for such a split is likely due to the desire to maintain the consecratory role of the institution narrative in the West, with a nod to the Eastern emphasis on the role of the epiclesis. Placement of the consecratory epiclesis after the words of institution would seem to suggest that the IN is inadequate, in the Western framework.

followed it while it was being prayed.”¹¹¹ On the other hand, as a result of the more mature and articulated theology of the Holy Spirit and the Church in recent theological work, the Church’s euchology could benefit greatly from an expansion. Rather than retrofit the Roman Canon with explicit pneumatological and ecclesiological language, the decision was made to augment the Roman Missal with new anaphoras. These anaphoras are based largely on early texts (the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, the Anaphora of St. Basil, and others) and hearken back to the Patristic theology of the Eucharist.

The Roman Canon has positive attributes which merit mention here: variable prefaces that correspond and focus the thanksgiving on particular occasions, an emphasis on the communion of saints and the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, as well as a focus on Christ’s role and the centrality of the Paschal Mystery. Yet, the Roman Canon contains no epiclesis, no explicit invocation of the Holy Spirit (which reflects its high Christological emphasis), and no emphasis upon the unity of the Body of Christ as the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist.¹¹² In light of recent theological work on the Trinity and the Church, the recovery of early anaphoras, as well as dialogue with other liturgical traditions (namely the Orthodox), I contend that the addition of new EPs to the Roman Canon has enhanced the understanding of the connection between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion.¹¹³

Some of the tension that has arisen from the addition of new EPs to the Roman Missal comes from the longstanding question of the “moment of consecration.” As was

¹¹¹ Irwin, *Models*, 275.

¹¹² Scholars have debated whether certain sections of the prayer (in particular the *Quam Oblationem*) are a type of invocation of the Spirit. In any case, the text contains no explicit epiclesis, and no mention of the Third Person of the Trinity until its doxological conclusion.

¹¹³ As Irwin points out, there are many who take the opposite position, asserting that the post-conciliar anaphoras were at best unsuitable, and at worst, invalid. Yet, they have been retained in recent revisions of the Roman Missal, and clarifications from the CDWDS have confirmed their validity and usefulness. Pope Benedict himself has lauded the diversity of Eucharistic Prayers, noting their “inexhaustible theological and spiritual richness” in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 48.

previously mentioned, this issue has long been a point of disagreement between the East and the West, and (as John McKenna puts it) is a lingering remnant of the Scholastic “almost overriding desire for precision” in sacramental theology.¹¹⁴ The distinction is certainly more nuanced, but in short, in the Orthodox tradition, consecration is attributed to the *epiclesis*: the explicit invocation of the Spirit upon the eucharistic gifts and those who will consume them. In the Catholic tradition, consecration has been attributed almost exclusively to the words of Christ in the narrative of institution.¹¹⁵

McKenna treats this issue thoroughly in his recently published book *The Eucharistic Epiclesis*. In examining the Patristic texts and theology, McKenna states “there is also widespread agreement that the Fathers generally tended to view the eucharistic prayer as a single consecratory whole. A number of authors...would share the viewpoint that the Fathers saw two essential moments, namely, the institution narrative and the epiclesis, within this broader framework of the whole anaphora as consecratory.”¹¹⁶ However, as we saw in the first chapter, with the rise of Scholasticism building upon Ambrose, the West took a decidedly Christocentric path and emphasized the words of Christ, while the East continued a more pneumatological approach, emphasizing the epiclesis. As we have seen from the first chapter of this essay, a focus on the “moment” or the “mechanism” of Eucharistic consecration has had the practical/ritual consequence of emphasizing one portion of the anaphora to the virtual exclusion of the whole.¹¹⁷ McKenna observes: “Once one limits oneself to an instantaneous transformation in the Eucharist and at the same time seeks to

¹¹⁴ McKenna, 72.

¹¹⁵ In fact, one can find Scholastic manuals of Eucharistic theology which narrow this “moment” even further, to the words “*corpus*” and “*sanguinis*.”

¹¹⁶ McKenna, 70.

¹¹⁷ Think, for instance, of the various rubrics and ritual ornaments (bells, incensing, elevations, etc.) connected to the words of institution, setting it apart from what should be one continuous prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

determine precisely what the 'form' responsible for this transformation is, one automatically tends to become exclusive."¹¹⁸

We have seen that the unfortunate consequence of exaggerated theological and ritual emphasis on the IN and the omission of the epiclesis in the Roman Canon has also failed to do justice to the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist: the sanctification and unification of the faithful by their sacramental Communion. This emphasis on the IN as the "form" of the sacrament by which bread and wine are "transubstantiated" has obscured the purpose of the Eucharist itself. Matthew Levering puts it this way: "A focus on the mechanism of transubstantiation tends to make the miracle itself (understood philosophically rather than theologically, i.e. without apprehending the role of the Holy Spirit) the center of attention, rather than placing the emphasis where it should be, namely the deifying communion to which transubstantiation is ordered."¹¹⁹ In fact, in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI reminds the Church: "In a particular way, eucharistic spirituality and theological reflection are enriched if we contemplate in the anaphora the profound unity between the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the institution narrative"¹²⁰

McKenna offers a way forward. He proposes a less "objective" understanding of Eucharistic consecration, in favor of a more "personalist" approach. The emphasis here is not so much on the "Real Presence" in itself, but rather on the person of Christ that is communicated in the Eucharist. McKenna writes:

¹¹⁸ McKenna, 73. See also Patrick Regan's fine article "Quenching the Spirit: The Epiclesis in Recent Roman Documents" in *Worship* 79, no.5 (Sept 2005): 386-404, in which he analyzes the documents of the 2005 Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and the *Lineamenta*). Regan rightly notes that in listing the four actions which fulfill the Lord's command regarding the Eucharist, the word "consecration" is used. Yet, the document itself references the *GIRM* #72, which names the "eucharistic prayer" as the second of the four-fold Eucharistic action. Regan also notes that the *Lineamenta* (referring to the Councils of Florence and Trent) calls the words of consecration alone, being the form of the sacrament, "essential and necessary." (*essentialia et necessaria tantum sunt verba consecrationis*)

¹¹⁹ Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 128.

¹²⁰ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 48. This line of thinking is consistent with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1333, which states that the bread and wine become Christ's Body and Blood "by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit."

Within the personalistic framework, consecration might still be regarded as the realization of the eucharistic presence. Within this framework, however, presence has taken on a much broader meaning...the *bodily presence* of Christ and the change which takes place in the gifts become *means* toward the realization of the fuller, and more important, mutual presence. This broader understanding of presence would, in turn, seem to call for a broader understanding of *consecration* in the Eucharist. Consecration, like presence, would then be seen not simply in light of the change in the material gifts but also in light of the change in those partaking.¹²¹

McKenna clarifies this statement by saying that this does not deny the importance or necessity of the Real Presence in the Eucharistic elements, but rather subordinates that aspect of the Eucharist to the end for which it is intended.¹²²

McKenna's personalist approach is consistent not only with classical theology, but also contemporary magisterial teaching on the relationship of the Eucharistic sacrifice and sacramental Communion. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in describing the Mass as a paschal banquet, states: "the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion."¹²³ And, as this essay aims to show, this "intimate union" brought about by sacramental Communion is the catalyst for the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist – the unity of the Body of Christ.

In summary, the epiclesis, and in particular the communion epiclesis, not only helps to situate the IN within the larger EP of "thanksgiving and sanctification", but also to reinforce the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist: "that all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit."¹²⁴

¹²¹ McKenna, 199-200.

¹²² McKenna, 200, note 26.

¹²³ CCC, 1382.

¹²⁴ Eucharistic Prayer II, *Roman Missal*.

THE ULTIMATE RES OF THE EUCHARIST

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas states clearly about the Eucharist: “The effect of this sacrament is the unity of the mystical Body, without which salvation cannot exist.”¹²⁵ Additionally, Aquinas writes: “The Eucharist is the sacrament of the unity of the whole Church.”¹²⁶ Matthew Levering, in his recent book *Sacrifice and Community*, explains that for Aquinas, “sanctification comes about by sharing in Christ’s passion as a member of his mystical Body.”¹²⁷

Along with Bonaventure, Thomas asserts that the *res et sacramentum* of the Eucharist is the eucharistic species, the “Real Presence”, but the *res* is the unity of the Body of Christ.¹²⁸ These teachings, far from being new ideas, build upon the theological tradition of the Church, as found in the Old Testament¹²⁹, the Gospel of John, the Pauline corpus, the *Didache*, and in the writings of Augustine and other Church Fathers. This theological concept is also articulated in the early Christian anaphoras. These texts and theological tradition have helped shape our understanding of the causal-symbiotic relationship between the Eucharist and the Church.

The Gospel of John (especially 11:49-52) makes clear that the death of Jesus is for unity, “to gather into the one the dispersed children of God.” An eminent scholar of early EPs and theology, Enrico Mazza claims “that unity is the fruit of Christ’s death. But, we know from elsewhere that the fruit of Christ’s death is salvation and redemption as the climactic moment of the entire plan of salvation. John 11:51-52 is saying, then, that unity is

¹²⁵ *ST* III, q. 73, a. 3.

¹²⁶ *ST* III, q. 83, a. 4.

¹²⁷ Levering, 104.

¹²⁸ Walter Cardinal Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity*, Brian McNeil, trans. (New York, New York: Crossroad, 2004), 120.

¹²⁹ See Jeremiah 30-31, Isaiah 49, to name but a few examples.

identical with redemption and that the theme of unity deals with the high point and completion of redemption and salvation.”¹³⁰

In the *Didache*, a concrete connection is made between the eucharistic bread and the Church: “As this broken bread was scattered over the mountains, and when brought together became one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.”¹³¹ The *Didache* inherited this Johannine understanding of salvation as the gathering of the Church into the kingdom of God through Christ.¹³²

In his first letter to Corinth, Paul writes that just as the loaf of bread is one, that those who participate in the Eucharist are together in the one Body of Christ. (I Cor 10:16ff) This theme of Christian unity is present throughout the Pauline writings. For Paul, the Eucharist is the “sacrament of unity”. Mazza asserts that the “Body of Christ”, when applied to the Church, is “no longer a mere sociological fact nor a literary image, but a reality that has a precise ontological density.”¹³³ Already, Paul has moved beyond the mere image presented by the *Didache*, to a sacramental conception of the Eucharist: the sharing in the bread brings about what is signified.¹³⁴

Augustine continued the theological development of Eucharist as the sacrament of unity. In fact, Mazza calls Augustine “the most important heir to the Pauline conception of the Eucharist as the sacrament of unity.”¹³⁵ Working within the Neoplatonic culture, Augustine taught that the Church is the Body of Christ because it participates in the Eucharistic bread, which is the Body of Christ on a higher level or degree of participation.

¹³⁰ Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York, New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1986), 184-85.

¹³¹ *Didache*, ch. 9, as found in Jasper & Cuming, 23.

¹³² Mazza, *Celebration*, 83.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

Thus, the Church and the Eucharistic bread are both a participation in the Body of Christ.¹³⁶ For Augustine, the community that eats the Eucharistic bread becomes the Body of Christ.¹³⁷

Turning to some early liturgical texts, we find in the anaphora of the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus a petition that the Father would send the Holy Spirit “upon the offerings of your holy Church; that, *gathering her into one*, you would grant to all who receive the holy things (to receive) for the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of faith in truth.”¹³⁸ The *Anaphora of St. Basil* contains similar language, asking that “all of us who partake in the one bread and cup *unite with one another* in the communion of the one, Holy Spirit...”¹³⁹

These examples – only a few among many – confirm that fundamentally the Eucharistic liturgy is not to be understood individually, but rather as a communal - indeed ecclesial - act. Just as the EP has an ecclesial dimension, so too is sacramental Communion an ecclesial act: the recipient is drawn into a more intimate union with Christ, for the purpose of building the unity of the Church. (This will be the focus of the third chapter of this essay.)

Yet the ecclesial-communal aspect of Eucharistic theology has not always been in the foreground. Walter Cardinal Kasper, in his recent book on the Eucharist, observes:

“If we wish to appreciate the full nature of the Eucharist, in keeping with scripture and the fathers, we must begin by freeing ourselves from an individualistic understanding. This certainly does not mean that communion is something other than personal fellowship and unity with Jesus Christ; but in the Bible, in the early church, and in the tradition of the high Middle Ages, this fellowship and unity with Christ in the Eucharist are always seen in the

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 158.

¹³⁸ Jasper & Cumming, 35.

¹³⁹ As found in McKenna, 23.

larger context of the fellowship (*communio*) of the church. At a later date, people largely lost sight of the fact that the Eucharist is about fellowship. The individualism and subjectivism of the modern period left their mark on the average understanding of the Eucharist, and even more on eucharistic praxis.¹⁴⁰

Kasper notes that dogmatic handbooks from the Scholastic period through the Second Vatican Council did not emphasize this fundamental aspect of the Eucharist. More attention is paid to the words of consecration, "Real Presence", and the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. One must turn to scripture, the Patristic authors, and Scholastic theologians, says Kasper, to find the proper orientation for Real Presence and sacrifice, namely that of unity.¹⁴¹

How, then, does this unity in the Body of Christ come about? Principally, it is the role of the Holy Spirit to form the Church more perfectly into the Body of Christ. The communion epicleses of the post-conciliar anaphoras express this Trinitarian assertion as clearly and succinctly as any liturgical text of the Roman Rite.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EUCHARIST

In the first chapter, we dealt with the epicletic dimension of the Eucharist as expressed in the EP. Here, we will discuss the particular way in which the communion epiclesis gives voice to this theology.

Yves Congar points out "the epiclesis does not come primarily or principally from sacramental theology but from the doctrine of the Trinity and therefore from the vision of the economy of salvation which that doctrine reflects."¹⁴² The communion epicleses give voice to the belief that sharing in the body and blood of Christ is not primarily an *individual*

¹⁴⁰ Kasper, 118.

¹⁴¹ Kasper, 117.

¹⁴² Yves Congar, "Pneumatologie ou Christomonisme dans la tradition latine?" *ETL* 45 (1969): 397, as found in Mazza, *Prayers*, 172.

encounter, but rather a sharing in the mystical body of Christ – the Church, in whom is operative that same principle of unity that is between Father and Son – namely, the Holy Spirit. As Irwin states, “from the point of view of liturgical theology, it is impossible to appreciate the value of church unity without relying on the invocation and power of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic prayer and Eucharistic action.”¹⁴³ The CCC states “the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body...[the Spirit] makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may ‘bear much fruit.’”¹⁴⁴ This sentiment is echoed when the Church prays to the Father to “fill us with his Spirit, through our sharing in this meal. May he take away all that divides us.”¹⁴⁵

When the risen Christ ascended to the Father, He gave His Spirit to the Church as a means of remaining with us. While Jesus is *physically* absent from the Church, he is made present by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Judith Kubicki notes, when we remember, we acknowledge the absence of something or someone; when we celebrate the Eucharist, we acknowledge Christ’s *physical* absence.¹⁴⁶ But, we also affirm and celebrate his *true, real, substantial, and pneumatic* presence by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, the epicletic dimension of the Eucharist (thankfully renewed in the Roman Rite in recent years) is fundamental. As we saw in chapter one in reference in the context of the EP, the epicletic is cooperative with, not competitive with, the Christological. With the Word, the Spirit is operative in the Eucharist, sanctifying the gifts and unifying those who eat and drink them; this principle of unity is the reason for the Eucharist.

¹⁴³ Irwin, *Models*, 268.

¹⁴⁴ CCC, 737, 1108.

¹⁴⁵ EP II for Reconciliation, Roman Missal.

¹⁴⁶ Judith M. Kubicki, *The Presence of Christ in the Gathered Assembly* (New York, New York: Continuum, 2006), 27.

SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION

How does the Spirit form the Church into the Body of Christ for salvation? This takes place primarily in the Eucharist (“the Eucharist makes the Church”), and in this context, uniquely through sacramental Communion. This will be the topic of the third chapter of this essay, but for now let us reflect briefly upon the intimate union of Christ and the Church which is brought about by the Spirit through sacramental Communion.

As we have seen above, Jesus’ command to “do this in memory of me” corresponds to both the necessity of giving praise and thanks to the Father, and the importance of the sacrificial meal. The *CCC* expresses this in saying, “the command of Jesus to repeat his actions and words ‘until he comes’ does not only ask us to remember Jesus and what he did. It is directed at the liturgical celebration...”¹⁴⁷

Patrick Regan has done a fine job of articulating the value of sacramental Communion as a privileged participation in the Eucharist. In his recent evaluation of Pope John Paul II’s *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Regan notes:

Shifting from communion in this spiritual sense to reception of the consecrated species, the Holy Father teaches that ‘through our communion in his body and blood, Christ also grants us his Spirit’ (no. 17) that ‘the Church is fortified by the divine Paraclete through the sanctification of the faithful in the Eucharist’ (no. 23) and that in Holy Communion is received ‘the gift of Christ and of his Spirit’ (no. 24) – splendid statements which express perfectly the content of communion epicleses in post-conciliar eucharistic prayers.¹⁴⁸

IMPLICATIONS

Again we turn to Patrick Regan for a succinct conclusion to the question of connection between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion:

By attributing both the sanctification of the gifts and the unification of the communicants to the Spirit of the Father, these post-conciliar prayers

¹⁴⁷ *CCC*, 1341.

¹⁴⁸ Regan, 394.

represent an enormous advance theologically because they witness to the joint action of all three persons of the trinity in the eucharist. By linking consecration and communion, they position the eucharist at the center of the mystery of the church and make its ecclesial implications more explicit.¹⁴⁹

What, then, are some practical implications of this theological assertion? First, EP I, due to the absence of a mature ecclesiology and explicit pneumatology, cannot adequately bear the entire load of the Church's euchology. The post-conciliar EPs have enriched the Roman Missal. Second, we must continue to find ways to express the role of the Holy Spirit in our liturgical texts. This should be the challenge of liturgical theologians in the coming era. Third, the issue of the "moment" of consecration is relatively unimportant. Such distinctions separate the unity of Christ and the Spirit, and as we have seen, place the Christological and pneumatological dimensions of the Eucharist at odds with a fuller Trinitarian understanding.

As McKenna reminds us:

It is permissible, even necessary at times, to concentrate on one or the other for the purpose of obtaining a better theological grasp of their distinct roles in the Eucharist. One should, however, never lose sight of the fact that the Eucharist is inseparably an action of the *Kyrios*, glorified Lord, and of the *Pneuma tou Kyriou*, the Spirit of the Lord. It is the Risen Lord exercising his Lordship in the Spirit or, to put it another way, it is the Spirit of the Lord at work.¹⁵⁰

Finally, we must continue to articulate the relationship between the sacrifice and meal, between the EP and sacramental Communion. Because bread and wine are truly changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, our partaking of them must be affirmed as a uniquely significant participation in the sacramental sacrifice of Christ, so that the Church at prayer will grow in her awareness as destined to become "one body, one Spirit in Christ."¹⁵¹ (We will treat the issue of "sacrifice" in the third chapter.)

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 388.

¹⁵⁰ McKenna, 222.

¹⁵¹ Eucharistic Prayer III, Roman Missal.

The communion epiclesis of the fourth EP of the Roman Missal says it best: "Lord, look upon the sacrifice which you have given to your Church; and by your Holy Spirit, gather all who share this one bread and one cup into one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise."¹⁵² Thus because the Eucharistic sacrifice is directed – in the EP, the "heart" of the Eucharistic liturgy, particularly in the Communion epiclesis – towards sacramental Communion, the Communion Procession deserves to be understood as the ritual summit of the Eucharistic liturgy.¹⁵³

What is the ritual preparation for this "summit?" What liturgical elements serve to connect Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion? We will turn to these next.

THE RITUAL CONNECTIONS: THE LORD'S PRAYER, SIGN OF PEACE, and BREAKING OF THE BREAD

One could argue, based on the preceding arguments about the fourfold shape of the Eucharist, for the breaking of the bread to take place immediately following the Eucharistic Prayer (or even within the EP after the line "he took the bread"), and for Communion to begin immediately after that. Ritually, this could reinforce the connection between the EP and sacramental Communion.

Yet, other ritual elements have made their way into the Eucharistic liturgy, and serve as a "bridge" between the EP and the Communion Procession. The Lord's Prayer, the Sign of Peace, and, obviously, the Breaking of the Bread flow from the EP and preface the Communion Procession. More than merely functional, the theological purpose of these rituals is to reinforce the connection between the EP and sacramental Communion. The

¹⁵² Eucharistic Prayer IV, Roman Missal.

¹⁵³ Cf. CCC, 1352.

GIRM states that they are rites “by which the faithful are led directly to Communion.”¹⁵⁴ Let us consider them from historical, theological, and liturgical perspectives.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

The Lord’s Prayer enters the liturgy at an early stage. There is textual evidence of this in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan in the mid- to late-fourth century. Early in the fifth century, Augustine mentions that “almost the whole world now concludes” the eucharistic prayer with the Lord’s Prayer.¹⁵⁵ Initially in Rome it was placed immediately after the breaking of the bread, but Gregory the Great, following thought by Augustine, wanted to link the prayer more closely to the EP.¹⁵⁶ John Quinn asserts that the Our Father (with its petition for forgiveness of sins connected with daily bread) is “surely the oldest penitential rite used in the Christian liturgical assembly. The examination of eastern and western liturgies would lead us to conclude that it is the fundamental and most ancient rite preceding communion.”¹⁵⁷

The *GIRM* describes it in this way: “In the Lord’s Prayer, a petition is made for daily food, which for Christians means preeminently the eucharistic bread, and also for purification from sin, so that which is holy may, in fact, be given to those who are holy.”¹⁵⁸ Yet the bread asked for in the Lord’s Prayer is not just for today, but the bread of the future, “the true manna of God.”¹⁵⁹ Benedict XVI, in *Jesus of Nazareth*, points out that the Vulgate translates the word for “daily” (in Greek, *epiousios*) into Latin as *superstancialis* (super-

¹⁵⁴ *GIRM*, 80.

¹⁵⁵ Dix, 131.

¹⁵⁶ Lawrence J. Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, Revised Edition (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2002), 99.

¹⁵⁷ John Quinn, “The Lord’s Supper” in *Living Bread, Saving Cup*, K. Seasoltz, ed. (Collegeville, MN: 1987), 237.

¹⁵⁸ *GIRM*, 81.

¹⁵⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 154.

substantial), thereby pointing to this higher “substance” that is given in Eucharistic Communion, “the true bread of our life.”¹⁶⁰

Jungmann notes that the position of the Lord’s Prayer immediately following the EP (led by the priest at the altar, prayed over the sacrificial gifts still on the altar) serves to unite the two prayers. He comments that the first part of the Lord’s Prayer even forms a sort of summary and recapitulation of the EP itself.¹⁶¹ Yet, Jungmann is also careful to point out that even in close proximity to the EP, the “canon remains an absolute unit, and the Our Father remains a Communion prayer...”¹⁶²

In Matthew’s Gospel, the Our Father is part of a catechesis on prayer in general. However, in Luke’s account, the Our Father is situated on Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. It is the Lord’s answer to the disciples’ question, “Lord, teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1) In his recent Christological writing, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI explains: “The fact that Luke places the Our Father in the context of Jesus’ own praying is therefore significant. Jesus thereby involves us in his own prayer; he leads us into the interior dialogue of triune love; he draws our human hardships deep into God’s heart, as it were.”¹⁶³

In the Eucharist, the *Christus totus* is drawn up into the act of offering praise and thanksgiving to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The earthly liturgy participates in the heavenly, and we join our prayers and sacrifices to the prayer and one sacrifice that Jesus Christ made once and for all on our behalf. In the Lord’s Prayer we are drawn up into Jesus’ own prayer in Jesus’ own words. Alexander Schmemmann extols the value of the Lord’s Prayer when he says it “is always our ultimate act of preparation for Communion, for being

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Jungmann, *Mass...*, II, 279. Jungmann also notes that in the Middle Ages, there was a widespread custom of combining the Lord’s Prayer with the elevation of chalice and Host, and in France, the subdeacon holding the paten would raise it at the petition concerning “daily bread.” (290-291)

¹⁶² Ibid., 280.

¹⁶³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 132.

Christ's own prayer, it means that we accept Christ's mind as our mind, His prayer to the Father as our prayer, His will, His desire, His life – as ours.”¹⁶⁴ This communion that is the object of the Lord's Prayer, this communion that Schmemmann describes, this communion that Jesus shares with the Father: this is what the Eucharist brings about. Therefore, the Lord's Prayer affirms that our prayer (in this case, the EP) is fruitful only when we are, as Jesus was, in communion with the Father (sacramental or otherwise.) Likewise our sacramental Communion must flow from the act of prayer we undertake in the great prayer of thanksgiving and consecration.

Just as in the doxology of the EP, there is an emphasis on thanksgiving for the name of God in the Lord's Prayer when we acclaim God's name as “hallowed.” We pray for “our daily bread,” a petition which has numerous dimensions. On the one hand, it is a prayer for material sustenance. Cyprian of Carthage notes that anyone who asks for bread for today is poor, and has nothing saved with which to purchase his food. Jesus may be teaching his disciples about how to renounce the world, its riches, and its splendor.¹⁶⁵ Surely this petition is also evocative of Israel's wandering in the desert for forty years, relying each morning on the manna provided only for that day by God.

On the other hand, it is “impossible to expunge the eucharistic dimension from the fourth petition of the Our Father...this petition also helps to transcend the purely material and to request already what is to come ‘tomorrow,’ the new bread.”¹⁶⁶ Cyprian also emphasizes the communal dimension here: “We who are privileged to receive the Eucharist

¹⁶⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent: Journey to Pascha*, revised edition (NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 61

¹⁶⁵ As noted in Benedict, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 152.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

as our bread must nevertheless always pray that none of us be permanently cut off and severed from the body of Christ.”¹⁶⁷

This implication of Communion as unifying the Body of Christ is inherent in the petition for forgiveness of sins. Matthew’s exhortation rings true: “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23ff) Augustine understood this when he said, “Before communion these words remove our sins of weakness.”¹⁶⁸ It is through the Eucharist that Jesus reconciles us, and all creation, to the Father. In the Lord’s Prayer, we pray for the strength to forgive others so that our sharing in the Eucharist through sacramental Communion may be more fruitful, and serve to build up the Body of Christ.

THE SIGN OF PEACE

Just as the Lord’s Prayer is concerned (at least as regards the petition for the forgiveness of sins) with the unity of the Body of Christ, the Sign of Peace ritually expresses this fundamental dimension of Eucharist. It picks up on the last petition of the Lord’s Prayer, in which we pray that we be forgiven “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” This forgiveness, this peace, is intimately connected to the unity that comes from the Eucharist and Eucharistic Communion.

Dix notes: “The kiss of peace as a sign of respect or friendship was as ancient among the Jews as Isaac’s blessing of Jacob and the latter’s reconciliation with Esau. The church inherited it from Judaism in her ceremonial in more than one connection.”¹⁶⁹ The Sign of

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 157.

¹⁶⁸ Augustine of Hippo, as found in Quinn, 241.

¹⁶⁹ Dix, *Shape...*, 107.

Peace has been located both in the Communion Rite and prior to the EP itself at various times in the history of the Roman Rite. When placed at the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word, this ritual was viewed as a sign of that mutual love required by Christ before offering sacrifice.¹⁷⁰ It also functioned as a seal and pledge of the prayers that preceded it.¹⁷¹ In fact, for these reasons and others, Benedict XVI himself has suggested that the Rite of Peace could return to a place at the end of the Liturgy of the Word (following the Prayer of the Faithful.)¹⁷²

At some point prior to the pontificate of Innocent I (401-417) Rome moved the Rite of Peace to immediately after the Our Father, which is consistent with the practice described by Augustine of Hippo.¹⁷³ Now connected to the Our Father and its petition for daily bread, this ritual gesture became more closely linked with the reception of the Eucharist, and was even exchanged when Communion was received outside of Mass.¹⁷⁴ At times when the Communion of the assembly was infrequent, the Rite of Peace gradually become something of a substitute for receiving Communion.¹⁷⁵ Jungmann notes that in the twelfth century, it was common practice for the kiss of peace to even be given by the priest to the consecrated Host (or where this was “unseemly”, to kiss instead the chalice, the corporal, or the paten.)¹⁷⁶

Again, we turn to the *GIRM* for its succinct, yet rich description of the Rite of Peace, “by which the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family,

¹⁷⁰ Johnson, 101.

¹⁷¹ Jungmann, *Mass...*, 322.

¹⁷² This is found in his writings prior to his pontificate, as well as suggested in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 49. Benedict's justification seems as liturgical as it is theological: this rite can become a bit “rowdy” and disrupt the prayerful progression of the Eucharistic Prayer into the Communion Rite. Still, there is historical precedent for the placement of the Rite of Peace prior to the Eucharistic Prayer. David Bonagura explains the thinking of the Holy Father on this issue (which is bound up in matters of papal authority vis-à-vis the liturgy, as well as liturgical theology). (David G. Bonagura, Jr., “The Future of the Roman Rite: Reading Benedict in the Light of Ratzinger,” *Antiphon* 13, no. 3 (2009): 228–46, at 241 ff.)

¹⁷³ Johnson, 101.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Jungmann, *Mass...*, 325.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 326-327.

and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament.”¹⁷⁷ Additionally, in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Benedict XVI offers a beautiful reflection on the inclusion of the Rite of Peace within the Eucharist:

“By its nature the Eucharist is the sacrament of peace. At Mass this dimension of the eucharistic mystery finds specific expression in the sign of peace. Certainly this sign has great value. In our times, fraught with fear and conflict, this gesture has become particularly eloquent, as the Church has become increasingly conscious of her responsibility to pray insistently for the gift of peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family.”¹⁷⁸

The danger, of course, is that often times the Sign of Peace does not embody the values so eloquently articulated by the *GIRM* and the Holy Father. On the contrary, this ritual gesture often becomes a raucous interlude, an “intermission” in the one, continuous fourfold shape of the Eucharistic liturgy. For many, it may be the first time they’ve spoken to, or acknowledged the fellow worshippers seated around them – in this case, it is more a greeting and not a genuine expression of “ecclesial communion and mutual charity.” In other cases, it is an uncomfortable action, which draws one outside of his comfort zone, and may be dreaded each Sunday from the onset of the Lord’s Prayer. In still other instances, it can devolve into an isolated experience, in which the fellowship experienced in the community is not always seen as connected to the EP before it, or leading towards the sacramental Communion which will follow. (Think, for example, of the obligatory “greeting of the bridal party” which now takes place at most weddings...this ritual alone can last longer than the entire EP!) The Rite of Peace can become overly “horizontal,” with little regard for the reality that the unity of the Body of Christ comes about primarily through the union of each believer with Jesus through the Eucharist.

¹⁷⁷ *GIRM*, 82.

¹⁷⁸ *SC*, 49.

Yet, with all of its potential risks and misuses, the Rite of Peace survives as a key ritual linking the EP and sacramental Communion. It draws our bodies into what our words have already expressed: namely, that through the Eucharist, Jesus reconciles us to God the Father, and we are called to reconciliation with one another, so that there may be peace on earth.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

We have already established that this final rite of preparation for Communion is one of the cardinal elements in the fourfold shape of the Eucharistic liturgy. It is such a central action that it has throughout history given the Eucharistic liturgy its name. "The breaking of the bread" is what the disciples in the Acts of the Apostles gathered for on the first day of the week. In the Easter evening Emmaus encounter, the disciples who encounter the Lord know him "in the breaking of the bread." The *GIRM* states: "Christ's gesture of breaking bread at the Last Supper, which gave the Eucharistic Action its name in apostolic times, signifies that the many faithful are made one body, by receiving Communion from the one Bread of Life which is Christ..."¹⁷⁹

The rite of breaking the eucharistized bread is certainly connected to both the EP and the Communion Procession, yet stands alone as an independent ritual. The original purpose of the Fraction Rite was for distribution to the people. The bread was broken by the bishop, or by assisting deacons, so that all present could share in the Communion. But there was also rich symbolism even in the apostolic age. We have already seen that as early as the Pauline letters (e.g. I Cor 10:16) that the loaf of bread represents the unity of the Church. Ignatius of Antioch follows this line of thinking in his own writing. Mazza summarizes

¹⁷⁹ *GIRM*, 83.

Ignatius' approach: "The unity of the Church in its turn has a privileged connection with the Eucharist, inasmuch as all the elements making up the rite suppose and create unity: the eucharistic assembly, the prayer of thanksgiving, and the bread and wine which are the Body and Blood of Christ."¹⁸⁰ However, by the end of the second century, this symbolism becomes secondary to "breaking the Body of the Lord", as in the Passion.¹⁸¹ A shift from breaking only one loaf to the necessary use of multiple loaves of bread may have contributed to this symbolic shift. There was also a need to parallel the symbolism of the broken bread with that of the sacramental Blood of Christ, which was "shed for many."

The chant *Agnus Dei* accompanies the rite of breaking the bread. It, too, serves as a connection between the EP and Communion. The petition is directed to the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", who is sacramentally present upon the altar. Jungmann points out that "we can see at once that the address to the Lamb of God patently does not refer to Christ simply, but rather to Christ present in the Eucharist as a sacrificial offering; in the same way, just before the distribution of Communion, when the priest holds the Sacrament upraised before the faithful...it is the sacramental Christ who is meant."¹⁸² The *Agnus Dei* represents one of the few elements of the Eucharistic liturgy which is not directed to the Father; along with the *Kyrie eleison*, it is a prayer of supplication offered directly to Christ, a "reverential, and at the same time, humble greeting of Him who has been made present...in the interval between consecration and Communion."¹⁸³ When the fraction rite was abandoned after the ninth or tenth century (due to Communion being received by the

¹⁸⁰ Mazza, *Celebration*, 95.

¹⁸¹ Dix, 131.

¹⁸² Jungmann, *Mass...*, 335.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

priest alone), the chant is used at other points in the liturgy (accompanying the Rite of Peace or during Communion itself.)¹⁸⁴

Liturgically, the Breaking of the Bread has peculiar demands: as we have seen, it is both functional (as preparation for Communion) and symbolic (of the unity of the Church and of the historical Body of the Lord.) As such, it requires careful ritual attention. Functionally, it is required because of the Communion of the assembly (at least until the use of individual round wafers becomes normative.) But its symbolic value is of equal import. When the presider begins this rite while the exchange of the Sign of Peace is still underway, it is robbed of its symbolic value. When it is done hastily (functionally) its sign value is limited. When the “one loaf” that is broken is really a small flat wafer, to be consumed by the priest alone (while the assembly will consume smaller, individual hosts), the symbolic expression is completely devoid. We will discuss the reprobated practice of bringing the reserved Sacrament from the tabernacle to the altar at this point in the liturgy in the following chapter. Functional and symbolic have equal weight here: without giving the Fraction Rite any “undue importance”, it should be carried out “with proper reverence.”¹⁸⁵

The new *GIRM* (published with the third typical edition of the Roman Missal, in 2000) eliminates any pouring of the Precious Blood during this point in the Mass. So great is the concern about spilling the consecrated wine that the instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* directs that any fractioning of the wine (pouring into cups) must be done prior to the EP.¹⁸⁶ This practice of pouring multiple cups is a relatively recent innovation anyway, due to the permission for Communion under both kinds on a more regular basis since the Second Vatican Council. On the one hand, many lament the removal of the “fraction” of the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 337.

¹⁸⁵ *GIRM*, 83.

¹⁸⁶ *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 106.

Precious Blood, seemingly because it creates an undue distinction between the two Eucharistic species or destroys the sign value. However, despite the doctrine of concomitance, and the unity of the two elemental forms of Christ's presence, the symbolic value involved is different. We have seen that the wine carries the symbolic value, and indeed the true, real, substantial Precious Blood of Christ. It is the species of bread that most represents the unity of the Church; breaking the bread is a symbolic action in a way that pouring wine is not.

In short, the celebration of the Eucharist is a participation in Christ's sacrifice, in which God, through Christ the sacrificed Lamb, has mercy on us. The final petition to "grant us peace" is an echo of both the embolism of the Lord's Prayer and the Rite of Peace.¹⁸⁷ These three rituals form a seamless transition between the EP and the Communion Procession, and reinforce the inherent connection between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion.

CONCLUSION

We have demonstrated that the Eucharist is the "sacrament of unity", which is directed toward and culminates in sacramental Communion. It is this privileged participation in the Eucharist through sacramental Communion, the ritual "summit" of the Mass, to which we will turn in the following chapter.

¹⁸⁷ Jungmann even notes that this petition may have been added when the chant was used to accompany the Rite of Peace and not the Fraction Rite. (*Mass...*, 339)

CHAPTER THREE:

SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION AS "SUMMIT"

In our earlier chapters, we affirmed the centrality of the EP in the Mass, and how the great prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification is concerned not only with the change in the Eucharistic elements (especially in the first epiclesis and IN), but also with the sanctification of those who participate by receiving Communion (in the second, or "communion" epiclesis.) It is clear that the EP is the "center" and "heart" of the Mass, not simply because it contains Jesus' words of institution of the Eucharist, but also because it is in this theologically rich, Trinitarian prayer with its doxological conclusion, that the anamnestic, epicletic, and ecclesial dimensions of the Eucharist provide context for the Christological IN. In proclaiming the EP, the Church fulfills Jesus' command to give thanks to the Father in his memory.

With this in mind, we explored the connection between the EP and sacramental Communion. Not only did we demonstrate that these two ritual elements fit within the overall shape of the Eucharistic action that the Church has received, but also that the Lord's Prayer, the Rite of Peace, and the Breaking of the Bread serve to connect the EP and the Communion Procession, while simultaneously continuing the emphasis on unity. Also, it is clear that the communion epicleses of the post-conciliar prayers are a key to understanding the link between Eucharistic praying, sacramental Communion, and the unity of the Body of Christ.

It will be the aim of this final chapter to argue that because sacramental Communion is such a privileged participation in the Eucharist, indeed the culmination of the Eucharistic sacrifice, that the Communion Procession is, in fact, the ritual “summit” of the Mass. My argument throughout this essay has been primarily liturgical, not doctrinal. Thus I argue that it is the Communion Procession, as communal liturgical action, that is the “summit”, rather than the individual’s reception of the Communion as her/her own personal “summit.” The eating and drinking finds its proper context within the Communion Procession of the Eucharistic liturgy. The *GIRM*, while based on systematic theology, is primarily a liturgical document: it is the introduction to the Missal itself. Thus, my argument for shifting the designation of “summit” (in the *GIRM*) from the EP to the Communion Procession is confined to the liturgical-ritual dimension, in the Eucharistic liturgy itself.

On what grounds can I make such a claim? As the first two chapters of this essay have endeavored to demonstrate, the shape of the liturgy, the entirety of the Eucharistic action given to us by Christ, culminates in sacramental Communion. The Church – based on scripture and magisterial teaching – makes this very claim herself. In its various documents, the Church describes how the reception of sacramental Communion “perfects”, “completes”, “intensifies” participation in, and is the “culmination” of the Eucharistic liturgy. To reiterate the Catechism’s bold assertion: “The celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through [sacramental] communion.”¹⁸⁸

I hope to demonstrate that it is inherent in the nature of Christian sacrifice that those who offer the sacrificial oblation would afterwards partake of it. Moreover, and perhaps most important in light of what we have discovered about the ultimate *res* of the Eucharist, it

¹⁸⁸ CCC, 1382.

is the Communion Procession at Mass that most fully manifests and realizes the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, and fulfills Jesus' command to eat and drink. The Communion Procession is an icon of the heavenly banquet, in which all who are reborn in Christ are eternally sustained by His very self. In the Communion Procession - this singularly unique sacramental participation in the Body and Blood of Christ - the Church is brought into unity with Jesus, who by his death and resurrection gives us a share in God's own life through the wedding feast of the Paschal Lamb. The post-communion prayers of the Roman Missal not only reinforce the importance of sacramental Communion in the life of the Church, but also that this Communion is always both *personal* and *communal*, never *individualistic*.

There are liturgical issues to be addressed vis-à-vis the affirmation that the Communion Procession is the summit. With increasing frequency, sacramental Communion is received apart from the Eucharistic liturgy. While the reception of Communion by the sick and the dying has always been part of the Eucharistic tradition of the Church, the phenomenon of "Communion services" in place of Mass, or even on weekdays, runs the risk of separating the unity between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion.

Within Mass itself the practice of Communion from the tabernacle, as well as individualistic devotional practices within the Communion Rite have long betrayed the belief that sacramental Communion is fundamentally a communal activity, one connected to the liturgical celebration in which the Communion Procession normally takes place. Because the way we pray goes hand in hand with what we believe, it is essential that the Communion Procession be an icon of the heavenly banquet, where "sacraments shall cease."

So, with all of this in mind, the aim of this final chapter will be to assert that the Communion Procession is the ritual "summit" of Mass. We will begin by considering what sacramental Communion "does" – for the believer, for the liturgical assembly, for the

Church. We will then briefly trace the history of the reception of Communion within Mass, to show that the reception of Communion by the faithful is properly part of the liturgy itself. This is because sacramental Communion is not only essential to the Eucharistic sacrifice, but is its culmination.

We will analyze the theological issues related to the problem of regular “Communion without Eucharist”, both on Sunday and on weekdays, and show that regularly receiving Communion outside of Mass is problematic. Combining the theological with the pastoral/practical, I will analyze the Communion Rite as an icon of the heavenly banquet (offering some insights on its fruitful and authentic celebration), and conclude with some reflections on the Post-Communion Prayers as found in the current Roman Missal. It will become clear that the liturgy itself – in ritual and text – emphasizes that sacramental Communion is concerned with the unity of the Body of Christ, which is the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist.

COMMUNION and MASS

We have already considered at length how the sacrament of the Eucharist is fundamentally about the unity of the Body of Christ – head and members. We have seen that the EP (especially in the second epiclesis) is directed towards this unity of the Church. Implied in this discussion has been the role that sacramental Communion plays; yet we have not reflected at length upon the particular role that scripture and the theological tradition have ascribed to this reception of the Eucharist. In this section of the essay, I will try to articulate what sacramental Communion “does.” While Communion should not be isolated from the Eucharist in the broader context of the Mass, I will consider the specific action of receiving the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ and its effects. I will attempt to show

that sacramental Communion is a more perfect participation in the Eucharist, an incomparable (at least shy of heaven) encounter with the true, real, substantial presence of Christ. This will lead to a brief sketch of the historical relationship of Communion to Mass, where we will see that the connection between Communion and Mass has not always been so strong. We will affirm, with contemporary theologians and the magisterium, that the celebration of the Eucharist is wholly, intrinsically directed towards its culminating point in the reception of sacramental Communion. We will conclude with some discussion of the Eucharist as sacrifice, and the part that sacramental Communion plays.

THE FRUITS OF SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION

Jesus does not offer mere *signs* of his Body and Blood to remain present to His disciples after He is glorified. It is clear from the Johannine “Bread of Life” discourse that what Jesus offers is His *very self*. This discourse follows Jesus’ multiplication of loaves, and the disciples’ questioning Jesus about how their ancestors ate manna in the desert. Jesus begins by telling His disciples that He is the “bread of life” who came down from heaven. Yet this statement seems more connected with Jesus as the agent of God’s revelation than with the Eucharistic promise to follow. No doubt these words could have been understood in a metaphorical, figurative way. But Jesus brings it home when he asserts that the bread he gives is his very flesh “for the life of the world.” (Jn 6:51) One must eat his flesh and drink his blood to gain eternal life. As Robert Barron says: “Jesus unambiguously identifies himself with this bread that will nourish his people to eternal life.”¹⁸⁹ Barron also notes that the Greek word used here for “eating” is *trogein*, which was typically used to mean “gnaw” or

¹⁸⁹ Robert Barron, *Eucharist* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis), 99.

“munch.”¹⁹⁰ And while this line of thought has led to grossly exaggerated physicalism with regards to the sacramental nature of the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ, it is nevertheless clear that feasting upon this Bread of Life will require eating. Roch Kerestzy aptly describes the way in which John’s Gospel is the fulfillment of the Eucharist prefigured in the Old Testament:

In the Eucharistic doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, then, we see an ever richer synthesis of OT themes than is present in the synoptics. Jesus is both Wisdom incarnate who invites us to his banquet and the Lamb of God who, as the Suffering Servant and the true Passover Lamb, procures the food and drink for us through consummating in himself the Passover mystery. The food and drink he provides is nothing less than his sacrificed and risen self, and through this offering of himself a most intimate communion with the Father.¹⁹¹

In the previous chapter, we discussed at length the unifying aspect of sacramental Communion – we will return to this theme towards the conclusion of this chapter. We have already seen that Patristic authors up to and including Augustine emphasize that receiving the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ serves to build up the ecclesial Body of Christ. But, as early as Ignatius of Antioch (early second century), there is also an emphasis on the Eucharistic elements as “medicine of immortality.” It is clear that the reception of Communion brings immortality for the recipient, who thereby “has eternal life.” (Jn 6:54) Pope Benedict (then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger) has this in mind when he writes: “Receiving Communion means entering into communion with Jesus Christ; it signifies moving into the open through him who alone could overcome the limits and thus, with him and on the basis of his existence, becoming capable of resurrection oneself.”¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Barron, *Eucharist*, 100.

¹⁹¹ Kerestzy, 61.

¹⁹² Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God is Near Us*, Henry Taylor, trans. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 81.

Aquinas understands the consecrated bread and wine to be in the order of sacrament, as spiritual food.¹⁹³ Thomas says that through our sacramental Communion, we participate in the flesh and divinity of Christ and we are drawn into Communion with one another through Him. Aquinas compares the spiritual nourishment brought about by sacramental Communion to the bodily nourishment of eating ordinary food. There is clearly a causal relationship in the thought of Aquinas, by which eating the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ brings spiritual nourishment. For Aquinas, there is also a *personal* dimension to this sacrament: while other sacraments have as their effect the grace of Christ, the Eucharist contains Christ Himself. Ratzinger picks up on this theme:

What is given here is not a piece of a body, not a thing, but him, the Resurrected one himself – the person who shares himself with us in his love, which runs right through the Cross. This means that receiving Communion is always a personal act. It is never merely a ritual performed in common, which we can just pass off as we do with other social routines. In Communion I enter into the Lord, who is communicating himself to me.¹⁹⁴

Among the reasons why popes and theologians have called for frequent Communion, we can speak first of all of the fruits that come from reception. In *Mediator Dei*, Pius XII focuses on the aspect of holiness brought about by sacramental Communion. He writes: “The very nature of the sacrament demands that its reception should produce rich fruits of Christian sanctity.”¹⁹⁵

Contemporary theologians such as Kerestzy and Robert Barron have likewise expressed the grace received by sacramental Communion. In his recent book, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, Kerestzy emphasizes both the Resurrection dimension and the cosmic significance: “The body and blood of Christ that nourish our bodies for eternal life constitute the Church’s sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, as well as the

¹⁹³ ST III, q. 73, a. 1.

¹⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *God is Near Us*, 81.

¹⁹⁵ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1948), 124.

source of the Church's communion....serves as food and paradigm for our moral and spiritual life: as bread for our journey...renews humankind as a cosmic sacrifice, God's material creation transformed into the body and blood of his Son."¹⁹⁶

Barron sees sacramental Communion both as deepening one's identification with Christ and the internalizing of the Law of God: "Jesus thus wanted them to ingest his sacrifice so as to appropriate it in the most intimate, organic way, making it bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh...the new law of the Gospel is efficacious because it is realized internally, through the identification of Christ and his body the church. And nowhere is this identification more complete than in the Eucharist, when a disciple physically consumes the incarnate Christ, the law *par excellence*."¹⁹⁷

Ratzinger, in *God Is Near Us*, also sees Eucharistic Communion as the union between disciple and Lord: "It is a sacramental event in which the corporeal Lord seizes hold of our bodily existence. In order to express fully the intensity and reality of this fusion, Paul compares what happens in Holy Communion with the physical union between man and woman."¹⁹⁸ He continues: "Normally while eating, the human is the stronger...we take things in, assimilate food into ourselves. But in the mutual relation with Christ it is the other way around; he is the heart, the truly existent being. When we truly communicate, this means that we are taken out of ourselves, that we are assimilated into him, that we become one with him and, through him, with the fellowship of our brethren."¹⁹⁹

The last sentence leads us perfectly to the contemporary magisterium, and the strong emphasis on the unifying aspect of sacramental Communion. The personal union with Christ leads towards the unity of the ecclesial Body. In the Catechism of the Catholic

¹⁹⁶ Kerestzy, 103.

¹⁹⁷ Barron, *Eucharist*, 88.

¹⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 77.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

Church, one of the names for the Eucharist itself is “*Holy Communion*, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body.”²⁰⁰ In the writings of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI, this most important aspect of sacramental Communion comes to the fore. For these contemporary popes, receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord brings about union with Him who is consubstantial with the Father. This has been evident in the writings we have already considered, especially those of Ratzinger in *God Is Near Us*. However, consistent with our understanding of the ultimate *res* of the Eucharist, this union with Jesus is the source of the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ – head and members.

In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II writes: “The saving efficacy of the sacrifice is fully realized when the Lord’s body and blood are received in communion.”²⁰¹ Later, he continues: “Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, especially by that full sharing which takes place in sacramental Communion... *each of us receives Christ*, but also, *Christ receives each of us*.”²⁰² In short, “Eucharistic communion confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ.”²⁰³

We have already looked briefly at *Sacramentum Caritatis* and Benedict XVI’s beautiful expressions about the Trinity and the Eucharist. Benedict also offers some profound reflections upon the encounter with the Triune God in sacramental Communion. Through this mystery, the Triune God becomes part of our human condition. “In bread and wine under whose appearances Christ gives himself to us in the paschal meal God’s whole

²⁰⁰ CCC, 1331,

²⁰¹ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 16.

²⁰² Ibid., 22.

²⁰³ Ibid., 23.

[Trinitarian] life encounters us and is sacramentally shared with us.”²⁰⁴ More than just statically receiving the Logos (the second person of the Trinity), we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving to the Father, similar to reaction process like nuclear fission, by which God becomes all in all.²⁰⁵

Edward Kilmartin echoes the Holy Father’s emphasis on sacramental Communion as the means of sharing in the life of the Triune God:

Holy Communion enables sacramental communion with Christ as the one who gives himself to the Father for humanity. He gives himself as the ‘man for others’ to draw the believers into personal communion with himself and so into communion with the Father. He does this through the sending of the Spirit as his Spirit to enable the communicants to share in his sentiments of self-offering. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the sacramental communion with Christ becomes the medium of spiritual, personal communion with the risen Lord.²⁰⁶

As we have seen from this survey of scripture, theologians, and magisterial teaching, it is unquestionable that sacramental Communion is a unique, personal, and profound encounter with Jesus Christ. This is no mere metaphor. This is not an encounter that takes place in one’s mind. While it has many facets (vivifying and deifying among them), the most important is that sacramental Communion brings about the unity of the Body of Christ that is the purpose of the Eucharist itself. Ratzinger himself offers us some concluding thoughts: “Because he [Christ] is one, we can only receive him in unity. If ever we were opposed to unity, we would be unable to meet with him...we cannot have communion with the Lord if we are not in communion with each other; that when we go to meet him in the Mass, we necessarily go to meet each other, to be at one with each other.”²⁰⁷ We will conclude this

²⁰⁴ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 8

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰⁶ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 370.

²⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *God is Near Us*, 52-53.

chapter with an extended treatment of the post-Communion prayers and how they express that the unity of the Body of Christ is chief among the fruits of sacramental Communion.

Despite all of the merits of sacramental Communion, this encounter with the Lord has not always been an integral part of the Eucharistic liturgy itself for the liturgical assembly. We turn next to the history of the relationship between Mass and sacramental Communion.

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP OF COMMUNION TO MASS

Throughout the history of Christianity, the practice of receiving Communion during Mass has been far from uniform or consistent. The Church began with the notion that it would be unthinkable that someone present for the Eucharist would not take part in the sacred meal. Over time, however, a growing penitential discipline and sense of sinful unworthiness led to a theology of “representative Communion”, in which the priest would consume the entire offering on behalf of the people. Martimort notes that by the thirteenth century, Communion of the faithful had become rare: “the obligation (then new) of prior confession, the requirement of continence for married persons all effectively combined to reduce eucharistic participation of the laity to viaticum for the dying.”²⁰⁸ Despite magisterial teaching to the contrary, if the faithful were to receive Communion at all, it would take place before, after, or completely disconnected from Mass altogether. During the last century, beginning with Pius X, the frequent Communion of the faithful during Mass has enjoyed a revival of sorts. It is once again normative that, unless impeded by serious sin or a fractured

²⁰⁸ A.G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer: The Eucharist*, Austin Flannery and Vincent Ryan, eds. (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1973), 186. Martimort cites P. Browe, *Die häufige Kommunion im Mittelalter* (Munster, 1938) for more detail.

relationship with the Church, the baptized who participate in the Eucharist receive sacramental Communion.

The great historian Jungmann notes: "In the early Church, because the concept of Mass as a sacred repast, a meal...was so much to the fore, it was taken for granted that the Mass would culminate in the reception of the Sacrament by all the participants."²⁰⁹ Jungmann continues to remark that up to the fourth century it was not only a rule that the faithful communicated at every Mass, but Communion was often more frequent than the celebration of Mass, which typically occurred only on Sunday. On Sunday, people received Communion, but also took leftover consecrated bread home for their personal Communion during the week.²¹⁰ Both the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus and the writings of Tertullian give evidence of private reservation of the Eucharist in Christian homes.²¹¹ This practice, at least in its origins, may have been a way to prolong the Eucharistic celebration of the Lord's Day, to remain connected to the Christian community even while at home.

Nathan Mitchell notes, however, that even in third-century writers such as Hippolytus, Cyprian and Tertullian one can see that the Eucharist is regarded as doing something more than effecting communion between believer, Christ, and Church. The eucharist has taken on apotropaic powers protecting Christians from danger.²¹² But, even more striking is the fact that weekday, personal, domestic reception of the Eucharist has changed the relationship between Sunday, the Eucharistic liturgy, and eucharistic Communion. Mitchell says: "Once holy food (communion) becomes independent of sacred

²⁰⁹ Jungmann, *Mass*, 343.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 360.

²¹¹ Mitchell, 11.

²¹² Ibid., 15.

meal (liturgical action), the basic conditions are established for both communion outside Mass and, eventually, a cult of the eucharist outside Mass.”²¹³

It is possible to trace the progression of the Eucharistic liturgy from being a meal itself, to being a rite at the end of a meal, to an independent liturgical rite. By the Scholastic era, the word “Eucharist” becomes associated most strongly with the consecrated bread and wine.²¹⁴ The movement in the Eucharistic liturgy towards allegorical interpretations²¹⁵ makes the liturgy less a communal action, and more a series of scenes to be watched while one meditates on the events of Jesus’ life. In the words of Mitchell, “thus, Eucharistic elements become ‘props’ that can be separated from Mass and used for other purposes.”²¹⁶ The altar table as a root metaphor for the new covenant between God and the world in Jesus Christ has been replaced by an allegorical interpretation of the altar table as a tomb. While a table is a place for communal dining in the present, the tomb is always about the past.²¹⁷

In light of this new approach to Eucharistic theology, it ultimately becomes possible for someone like Paschasius Radbertus (in the early ninth century) to write about the Eucharist completely separately from the ritual, in a purely philosophical context. Nonetheless, until at least the eighth century the Communion of the faithful certainly took place within Mass. With the Carolingian reform, the Communion of the liturgical assembly was more and more relegated to after Mass, but remained united to (albeit outside of) Mass itself.

However, the theological and liturgical landscape was changing. In the ninth century, an emphasis on the priest’s power to consecrate the Eucharist led to anointing his hands in the

²¹³ Ibid., 16.

²¹⁴ Cf., e.g., Mitchell, 19-29.

²¹⁵ Theodore of Mopsuestia and Amalarius of Metz are prime examples of such a theological interpretation.

²¹⁶ Mitchell, 61.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 54.

rite of ordination.²¹⁸ Thus, a shift took place and Communion was distributed not into the hands of the faithful, but on their tongues. At the same time, drinking the Precious Blood begins to be restricted to the clergy. At first, Communion via a straw seemed a proper way to safeguard the consecrated species, and intinction was another method to avoid drinking (and spilling) the Blood of Christ. Under these circumstances the doctrine of concomitance was developed, explaining that the entire Christ could be received under either the form of bread or wine.²¹⁹ The cup was all but completely withheld from the laity. These were steps on the path towards more infrequent Communion by the laity. Jungmann quotes Peter Blois (who died around the year 1200), who remarks about the problem of infrequent Communion on the part of the laity: "From the frequent celebration, a low esteem is sure to develop, but from the infrequent celebration grows reverence for the Sacrament."²²⁰

For its part, the Council of Trent encouraged the faithful to receive Communion regularly at Mass "not only by spiritual devotion by also by sacramental reception."²²¹ The newly published Roman Ritual (1614) calls for the reception of Communion during Mass, unless it is postponed "for a reasonable cause." In fact, it emphasized frequent Communion, the responsibility of the pastor to catechize about this, and the obligation of the Communicant to prepare.²²² Yet instead, in the post-Tridentine period, Communion outside of Mass for the people became more normal. Before Vatican II, it was the custom in many parishes to distribute Communion outside of Mass frequently, sometimes even continuing

²¹⁸ Ibid., 88.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 92-96.

²²⁰ Jungmann, *Mass*, 364.

²²¹ Council of Trent, Session 22, Chapter 6 in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Norman P. Tanner, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 734

²²² Mitchell, 234.

while Mass was being celebrated elsewhere in the church building.²²³ Additionally, fasting regulations made the pre-requisites for receiving Communion fairly stringent.

The problem here is, of course, that the Eucharist as “liturgical action” and as “sacred object to be received” have become two independent realities, rather than being understood as diverse dimensions of the one same experience. One consequence is that Communion outside of Mass becomes theologically feasible, even pastorally desirable, despite magisterial exhortations to the contrary.²²⁴

On the one hand, the aforementioned historical developments are wedded to the theology of the eras in which they took place. On the other, they represent a shift from some of the practices of the early Church. One of the theological shifts is from the Eucharist as the “source of unity in the Church” (a Pauline-Augustinian understanding) to the Eucharist as *primarily* the “union of each believer with Christ” for personal devotion and spirituality.²²⁵ (The conclusion of this chapter will attempt to explain how these concepts are properly related.) On this shift and its relationship to Communion, Dix notes:

In the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, popular eucharistic devotion becomes more and more one-sided, treating the sacrament less and less as the source of the unity and of the corporate life of the church (and through this the spiritual life of the individual soul), and more and more only as a focus of purely personal adoration of our Lord therein present to the individual. The infrequency of lay communions which was still general in this period (though the position as regards this had improved somewhat in the thirteenth century upon what had been customary for lay folk ever since the fifth and sixth centuries) was no doubt partly responsible for this trend.²²⁶

With these historical developments as background, in light of the connection we have already asserted between the EP and sacramental Communion, and the significant way

²²³ Ibid., 236.

²²⁴ A principal reason for Communion outside of Mass in this era is *pastoral* – to accommodate large numbers of Communicants – rather than *theological*.

²²⁵ Jungmann’s analysis of Eucharistic theology in the Middle Ages has been critiqued. For one example of this critique, cf. Eamon Duffy, “Lay Appropriation of the Sacraments in the Later Middle Ages,” *New Blackfriars* 77, no. 900 (December 1995): 53-68.

²²⁶ Dix, 249.

in which sacramental Communion brings about the unity of the Church, let us briefly explore the theological rationale for the reception of Communion, indeed the Communion Procession within Mass. This will bring us one step further towards our conclusion that the Communion Procession is rightly the ritual “summit” of the Eucharistic liturgy.

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR COMMUNION WITHIN MASS

As we noted in the introduction to both this essay and the present section, the magisterial teaching of the Church is clear that Communion by both priest and people is normative within the Eucharistic liturgy itself. While such questionable practices as the “private Mass” may still take place, and the Church’s moral teaching and ecclesiastical discipline may (rightly or wrongly) prevent some of the baptized from joining in its reception, it is nonetheless usual that Communion by the entire assembly – priest and people – takes place during, rather than outside of Mass.

Even *Mediator Dei*, while teaching that the Communion of the faithful during Mass is obligatory only for the priest, states that it is “earnestly recommended” for the faithful,²²⁷ “so that it is actually verified” that one has received every heavenly blessing and grace.²²⁸ While *MD* permitted distribution before or after Mass “not infrequently” for a reason, it also instructed that people “should not readily neglect the directions of the liturgy [which included receiving Communion during Mass]...and should aim that all their actions at the altar manifest more clearly the living unity of the Mystical Body.”²²⁹

The Catechism makes the intrinsic relationship between Mass and Communion unambiguous when it states: “The celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed

²²⁷ *Mediator Dei*, no. 115.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion.”²³⁰ In recent years, officials at the Roman Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments have echoed these sentiments. Recall Cardinal Arinze’s statement regarding the lay faithful: “The high point is when they communicate at the Eucharistic table. This crowns their participation at the Eucharistic Sacrifice.”²³¹

For his part, John Paul II agreed with this synthesis of Eucharistic liturgy and Eucharistic Communion. In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* he writes: “The Eucharistic Sacrifice [Mass] is intrinsically directed to the inward union of the faithful with Christ through communion.”²³² Later, he continues: “Through sacramental Communion the faithful take part more perfectly in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is strongly recommended that they should normally receive it during the Mass and at that point of the celebration which is prescribed by the rite, namely, immediately after the communion of the celebrant.”²³³

So, with clear affirmation of the profound deifying, vivifying, and unifying effects of sacramental Communion, and the clear directive that Mass is wholly, intrinsically directed towards that ritual action, we are one step closer to establishing the Communion Procession as the ritual “summit” of the Eucharistic liturgy.

Yet there is one significant stumbling block, inherent in each of the aforementioned statements: John Paul, in *Dominicae Cenaе*, teaches that the Eucharist is above all a sacrifice.²³⁴ Since Trent’s assertion that the Mass not only is a memorial of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ but also a true and proper sacrifice on its own, Catholic theology has struggled mightily to define the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice. This is no doubt one (if not *the most*)

²³⁰ CCC, 1382.

²³¹ Arinze, *Celebrating the Eucharist*, 41.

²³² *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 16.

²³³ *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 31 in *Vatican Council II, Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, ed. (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing, 1996)

²³⁴ John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenaе* (Boston, MA: St. Paul Books and Media, 1980), 9.

significant ongoing issue in Eucharistic theology: how does the sacrifice offered on our altar today relate to the historical sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross?

Before we go further, let us examine the notion of the Eucharist as a "sacrificial sacrament", trace the theological developments that have led us thus far, and explore some possible ways forward. Our goal will be to show that sacramental Communion perfects our participation in the sacrifice of Christ, which was for the sake of unity in the Church.

Through sacramental Communion at Mass, we share in Christ's sacrifice, and offer ourselves in Him. Francesco Pio Tamburrino, former Secretary of the CDWDS concurs: "The culminating point of the sacrificial meal, of the *cena dominica*, is *sacramental communion*. It is there that we become one - a communion - not only in communion with the Person of the risen Lord, but also with his sacrifice."²³⁵

As Edward Kilmartin puts it: "The sacramental sharing in the body and blood of Christ makes the community one body and draws it into the fate of the one body of Christ...In this way Christ is there to build up the faithful into a spiritual temple, in order that the faithful become changed into the true body of Christ and so become themselves a sacrifice pleasing to God."²³⁶

COMMUNION and SACRIFICE

It is not essential to the notion of sacrifice that the offerers should be invited afterwards to be God's guests at table. But the Sacrifice of Christendom was so instituted, for it is a family celebration, the celebration of the family of God, namely, those who belong to Christ and who, because of Baptism, are bound to Him by ties of most intimate fellowship. Thus they stand before

²³⁵ Francesco Pio Tamburrino, "The Mystery of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Sacrifice, Communion, Presence," in Pontifical Consilium Pro Laicis, *Rediscovering the Eucharist* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), 60.

²³⁶ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 381.

God, a holy people. The *communio sanctorum*, which is the holy Church, has to be made manifest in the *sacra communio* of the Sacrament.²³⁷

With these words, Jungmann begins the third part of his landmark work on the Mass. He clearly names the issue at hand: the reception of Communion is an essential part of the sacrifice that takes place in the Eucharist. In the following pages I will trace a bit of the history of theological development of the relationship between sacramental Communion and Eucharistic sacrifice, to show their integral relationship.

My argument is, of course, that Communion functions as the *ritual* summit of the Mass: I do not intend to diminish the significance of the divine action in the change of the Eucharistic gifts via the EP. Nor do I intend to argue, as others have, that “transubstantiation” should be replaced by other equally complex metaphysical formulations: it remains one way of understanding Eucharistic consecration, and the most significant in the Western tradition. My claim is based on the ritual activity of the Church.

Based not only on the experience of the faithful since the Second Vatican Council, but on the rite of Communion itself, it is clear that the reception of Communion is the highpoint of Mass. Since liturgy and dogmatics should be theological bedfellows not enemies (and since Vatican II have enjoyed a more harmonious relationship in this regard) it is important that the Eucharistic liturgy faithfully correspond to the sacrifice of the Christ which it sacramentally re-presents. Also, as we continue to develop our understanding of how the Eucharist is a “true and proper” sacrifice in its own right, we can assert more clearly how sacramental Communion is a more perfect participation in that sacrifice.

²³⁷ Jungmann, *Mass*, 275.

SACRAMENTAL SACRIFICE

For Thomas Aquinas, the Eucharist is both sacrament and sacrifice. While he distinguishes between these two dimensions of the Eucharist (and their respective effects) they are fundamentally interrelated. It is a sacrifice because it is offered: its benefits apply to all for whom it is offered (living, dead, present, absent.) It is a sacrament, insofar as it is received: its effects are limited to those who receive the gifts in Communion.²³⁸ As Bruce Marshall says: “So while the Eucharist is at once sacrament and sacrifice, the concepts of ‘sacrament’ and ‘sacrifice’ each do their own work in our understanding of it. Neither can be eliminated in favor of the other.”²³⁹

Marshall points out that many scholars have observed that Aquinas’ treatment of the sacrificial aspect is “remarkably modest” when compared to his discussion of the Eucharist as sacrament. Marshall goes on to point out that Aquinas (as well as Lombard and Bonaventure) likely underemphasized the sacrificial dimension because it was never really in question by the time they were writing.²⁴⁰ Of course, by the time of the Reformation, the issue of Eucharist as sacrifice had become the battleground, but in Aquinas’ day, it was the sacramental nature of the Eucharist that was in need of reflection. Scholarship on Aquinas’ treatment of the Eucharist is obviously extensive, and beyond the scope of inquiry here. For our purposes, we will have to settle for only a few pieces of Aquinas’ vision, in particular, of the relationship between Communion and Mass.

We have already seen that Aquinas allows for the possibility of spiritual Communion, by means of simply participating in the Eucharistic liturgy, or by being among those for

²³⁸ *ST*, III, q. 79, art. 5, *respondeo*

²³⁹ Bruce D. Marshall, “The Whole Mystery of Our Salvation: Saint Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharist as Sacrifice” in *Rediscovering Aquinas in the Sacraments*, eds. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand, 2009), 40.

²⁴⁰ Marshall, 42.

whom the Mass is “offered.” However, he clearly advocates for the benefits of receiving the Sacrament: “There are two things to be considered in the receiving of this sacrament, namely, the sacrament itself, and its fruits, and we have already spoken of both. The perfect way, then, of receiving this sacrament is when one takes it so as to partake of its effect.”²⁴¹ In fact, Aquinas states that “receiving is of the very nature of the sacrament.”²⁴²

We have seen that for Aquinas sacramental Communion is the more perfect way of participating in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. In fact, Matthew Levering, in his account of the Thomist approach, describes this way of participation in the Eucharist as “cruciform communion.”²⁴³ Catherine Pickstock rightly connects sacrifice and sacrament in the reception of Eucharistic Communion. She notes that in receiving sacramental Communion, we receive a “sacrificial offering...the repetition of the offering made by God to Himself in the person of Jesus.”²⁴⁴

Despite Thomas’ own attempts for more synthesis between the two, the Thomistic tradition has tended to more sharply contrast “sacrifice” and “sacrament.” Thomas himself, working within his own Aristotelian metaphysical understanding of sacramentality, names the problem which will occupy theologians to the present day: “the sacrament of the Eucharist is completed in the very consecration of the matter, whereas the other sacraments are completed in the application of the matter for the sanctifying of the individual.”²⁴⁵ Thus the stage is set for a future in which sacramental confection and sacramental reception can be separated. While sacramentality has enjoyed a thorough

²⁴¹ *ST*, III, q. 80, art. 1, *respondeo*.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, q. 79, art. 7, reply to objection 3.

²⁴³ Cf. Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*.

²⁴⁴ Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing...*, 244, as found in Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 178.

²⁴⁵ *ST*, III, q. 73, art. 1, reply to 3.

theological treatment (leading to manifold articulations) over the past century, the way in which the Eucharist is a sacrifice in itself is still unclear in the theological tradition.

The Council of Trent, largely responding to the attacks of potential reformers, chose to emphasize the distinction between sacrifice and sacrament.²⁴⁶ Kilmartin states: "The fathers of the council were not able to view the sacramentality and sacrificial character of the Mass as one reality, and to ground the sacramental character of the Mass in the sacrificial." He notes that this is evident by the decision to treat the Eucharistic real presence and the Eucharistic sacrament before the question of the "sacrifice of the Mass."²⁴⁷

Kilmartin explains that sacrifice becomes the priority of Trent's Eucharistic doctrine. This addresses the problem of how the Mass relates to the once-for-all sacrifice of the Cross. The concept of "representation" then becomes at issue. Kilmartin remarks: "It is clear that the orientation of the teaching of Trent favors the understanding of the visible sacrifice as the representation of the sacrifice of the cross to the liturgical assembly."²⁴⁸ Of course, the concept of representing a historical reality in the present remained open for interpretation. And amidst all its emphasis on the "sacrifice" of the Mass, the fathers of Trent failed to offer an adequate definition of "sacrifice."²⁴⁹ Kilmartin argues that, to this day, there is no clear, agreed, dogmatic definition of *how* or *in what way* the Eucharist is a true and proper sacrifice itself.

In these considerations of the "sacrifice of the Mass", Edward Kilmartin argues that "identifying the sacrificial aspect of the Mass...with the formula of consecration remains somewhat insensitive to the link between the Eucharistic Prayer and the rite of Holy

²⁴⁶ This was not helped, of course, by the ten year timespan between the council's treatment of each concept.

²⁴⁷ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 178.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 175.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 183.

Communion.”²⁵⁰ This could make the sharing of the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ seem to be merely an “integral rite and not an essential aspect of the sacrificial dimension of the Mass.”²⁵¹

In the post-Tridentine period various theologians took different paths in their development of Eucharist as sacrifice. Some emphasized Communion as an integral part of the Eucharistic sacrifice itself. Domingo de Soto (1494-1560) saw three parts to the Eucharistic sacrifice: consecration, oblation, and Communion. Yet, only in Communion did he see realized in a perfect way the representation of the immolation (destruction) of Christ. Other theologians followed his lead in emphasizing Communion.²⁵² Robert Bellarmine serves as the principal source for later magisterial teaching (both in *Mediator Dei* and *Dominicae Cena*, which we will examine below.) Bellarmine’s emphasis was on a two-fold shape: consecration and Communion/consumption. For him, the immolation of the victim (Christ) takes place in its eating by the priest. The consumption by the priest is the consummation of the sacrifice, whereas the Communion of the faithful is only an eating of the victim. Robert Daly notes that Bellarmine was convinced that his teaching was fully in line with Aquinas. Bellarmine’s authority as a great theologian helped sell his position that true sacrifice required a destruction of the victim: this line of thinking is primary in later magisterial teaching. Interestingly enough, Daly continues to remark, “hardly anyone followed him in seeing that destruction in the sacramental consumption of the species.”²⁵³ In short, post-Tridentine Eucharistic theology, while briefly considering Communion as *essential*

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 186.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Robert Daly, “Robert Bellarmine and Post-Tridentine Eucharistic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 249. Daly examines in detail the theology of De Soto, along with Gabriel Vasquez, Henrique Henriques, and Leonardus Lessius – all who see some role for Communion in the sacrifice itself.

²⁵³ Daly, “Robert Bellarmine...”, 253.

to the sacrifice, settles for *integral*. More recent magisterial teachings (such as *Mediator Dei*) see sacramental Communion as an *essential* component of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

In *MD*, Pius XII teaches that Holy Communion “pertains to the integrity of the Mass.”²⁵⁴ For Pius, the sacrifice is essentially the unbloody immolation of the Victim which takes place through the separate consecration of the elements. Yet, Pius simultaneously affirms that “the august sacrifice of the altar is concluded with communion or the partaking of the divine feast.”²⁵⁵ For Communion (at least by the priest) to conclude the sacrifice is for Communion to be part of the sacrifice. We are close to affirming sacramental Communion as *essential* to and the culmination of the Eucharistic sacrifice, but there is work yet to be done.

A WAY FORWARD

In *Feast of Faith*, Joseph Ratzinger attempts to find the basic form [*gestalt*] of the Eucharistic liturgy. His ultimate conclusion is that the Last Supper provides the *content*, but not the *form* for the Christian Eucharist. It is the *eucharistia*, “a participation in the thanksgiving of Jesus” which expresses the meal elements within the sacrificial liturgy.²⁵⁶ Ratzinger states: “Thus *eucharistia* is the gift of *communio* in which the Lord becomes our food; it also signifies the self-offering of Jesus Christ, perfecting his trinitarian Yes to the Father by his consent to the Cross, thus reconciling us all to the Father in this ‘sacrifice.’ There is no opposition between ‘meal’ and ‘sacrifice’; they belong inseparably together in the new sacrifice of the Lord.”²⁵⁷ Ratzinger’s emphasis is not so much on the reception of the

²⁵⁴ *Mediator Dei*, 115.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, 49. Ratzinger clarifies that his use of the term *Eucharistia* is both for “the prayer of anamnesis in the shape of a thanksgiving” and for “the whole action.” (36-37)

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

Eucharistic gifts in Communion as part of the sacrifice, but more upon the synergy between the “meal” character and the nature of “sacrifice” in the Eucharistic liturgy.

For Kilmartin, the dialectic of Eucharist as “meal” and as “sacrifice” is not problematic: “The meal character is bound to the sacrificial character of the eucharistic celebration. Insofar as Jesus instituted the memorial of his self-offering in the symbolic actions of the Last Supper, the sacrificial and meal aspects are inseparable from one another. A sacrificial event is constituted in the form of a ritual meal process. This means that the meal character belongs to the shape of the celebration.”²⁵⁸ Kilmartin boldly state the issue:

The traditional fixing of the sacrificial act in the consecration of the eucharistic gifts by the priest needs to be critically examined. The sacrificial action of the Mass cannot be narrowed down to oblation and immolation, liturgically accomplished at the conversion, with the meal treated almost as an irrelevant sequel. From the biblical point of view, the sacrifice and meal cannot be separated.²⁵⁹

It is clear that Kilmartin is concerned with the inclusion of the “meal” in the sacrifice itself. What is at stake here is not so much the “meal character” of the Eucharist, but rather the reception of the Eucharistized gifts themselves. He continues:

According to the narrative of institution, it is the intention of Christ to give himself in such a way that he is simultaneously received. This biblical view can be described as follows: The Passover of Christ to glory, once-for-all, makes his self-offering an abiding ‘being-for-us.’ In the action of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ is proclaimed by word and represented and applied to the community in the giving over of the eucharistic gifts as food.

The function of the IN is to proclaim the way in which Christ will abide with his Church: by means of this spiritual food. The gift is given and received “simultaneously”, in sacramental Communion. Thus, the consumption of this spiritual food is intrinsic to the rite by which the sacrifice is offered:

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 340.

²⁵⁹ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 199.

The outward form of the representation of the sacrificial offering of Jesus is not a sacrificial rite in the commonly understood sense, but the distribution of his body and blood as food of life. The basic structure is the sacrifice of self-offering in the signs of food.²⁶⁰

Anscar Vonier interprets Aquinas as agreeing with this synthesis of meal and sacrifice:

There ought not to be in our spiritual attitude to the Eucharist any real separation between Mass and Communion. Suppose, *per impossible*, that there were an extreme multiplicity of private communions by the faithful on the one hand, and an ever-dwindling attendance at the sacrifice of Mass on the other; it would indeed be the gravest spiritual disorder. It would falsify the Eucharistic setting; it would see the sacrament through a misconception of its true role. The *usus sacramenti*, the use of the sacrament, as St. Thomas constantly calls it, follows upon the sacrament. The sacrament-sacrifice is followed by the sacrament-food. Such was the order at the institution of the Eucharist, when Christ Himself partook of it, before giving to His Apostles, thus completing in His own Person the whole Eucharistic sacrament.²⁶¹

Michael McGuckian also sees compatibility between the meal and the sacrificial elements of the Eucharist. In his recent book *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: A Search for an Acceptable Notion of Sacrifice*, McGuckian seeks to rearticulate the Sacrifice of the Cross and its relationship to the Eucharistic sacrifice. He argues that rather than seeing Christ's sacrifice as only one "act", that it should be understood as three "acts": offering Himself on the Cross, Christ's priestly mediation at the Father's right hand, and the heavenly banquet of the Lamb. He bases his claim on scholarship that shows that the Eucharist rightly belongs to the "genre" of a "communion sacrifice." This particular form of sacrifice was offered by Jews for thanksgiving. In fact, McGuckian states that the Greek word *eucharistia* is used to refer to a communion sacrifice well before the New Testament era.²⁶² Inherent in the communion sacrifice was that the victim was ritually consumed. The Passover belonged to the form of a communion sacrifice; McGuckian argues that the Last Supper similarly belonged, as the

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Anscar Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (Bethesda, MD: Zaccheus Press, 2003), 166.

²⁶² Michael McGuckian, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* (Chicago, IL: LTP, 2005), 32.

offering was consumed.²⁶³ Of course, in the latter case, the paschal lamb is replaced by Jesus, the eternal Lamb of God. McGuckian also argues that the narrow understanding of the Eucharist as only related to the Cross is a very late development (16th century) and that the anaphoras of the Church remind us clearly that the scope of salvation is much broader than just Calvary.²⁶⁴ Without confirming the specific nature of either the basis of early Eucharistic liturgies or the Last Supper itself, Matthew Levering notes the historical possibility of something like McGuckian's "communion sacrifice," noting that for Israel, sacrifice generally involves a meal: "sacrifice is completed in feasting."²⁶⁵

In this tri-partite concept of sacrifice, death is simply the necessary means for making the flesh of an animal available to be food. McGuckian argues that in the history of sacrifice, death is nothing on its own. There may be solemn ritual slayings, but "the death is, rather, the means to an end, and the end and culmination of the sacrifice is the meal."²⁶⁶ With this in mind, the Cross is the first of three acts in the sacrifice: it is the "offering." Christ's death was "once for all" (historical), but its effects are eternal. The sacrifice is eternal, but the eternity of the Cross is in Christ's priestly mediation and in the heavenly banquet.²⁶⁷

In McGuckian's scheme, the liturgy corresponds to Christ's sacrifice and in this way is sacramental. The Offertory corresponds to Christ's death: the baptized bring forward the gifts of creation, manipulated by their work, to be offered sacramentally with Christ. McGuckian finds support in *Dominicae Cena*, which states: "Although all those who participate in the Eucharist do not confect the sacrifice as he does, they offer with him, by virtue of the common priesthood, their own *spiritual* sacrifices represented by bread and wine

²⁶³ Ibid., 44.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 123.

²⁶⁵ Levering, 65.

²⁶⁶ McGuckian, 97. He notes that there is a linguistic connection: the word *victim* comes from the Latin *victus*, "food."

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 99.

from the moment of their presentation at the altar.” McGuckian criticizes any attempts to remove the sacrificial intent or language from the Offertory rites: this is where he parts ways with many a liturgical theologian.²⁶⁸ Yet, even with this emphasis on the Offertory (which we have seen as problematic in the work of Dix as well), his argument is not without merit.

McGuckian continues to associate the EP with Christ’s priestly mediation at the Father’s right hand, the second of the three sacrificial “acts.” He notes that in Ezekiel 44, it is made clear that the slaying of the victim is the act of the offerer, not the priest. The role of the priest only begins after the victim has been slaughtered. Thus, the offering of the priest in the EP is not the primary offering of sacrifice: that happens in Offertory, and is done by priest and people together. The priest’s role in EP is a mediatorial offering of prayer to God, sacramentally representing (*in persona Christi*) Jesus’ intercession with the Father. Ratzinger might support this approach, for he says: “The eucharistic prayer is an entering-in to the prayer of Jesus Christ himself; hence it is the Church’s entering-in to the Logos, the Father’s Word, into the Logos’ self-surrender to the Father...”²⁶⁹

The difficulty with this model is, of course, that it does not square with the centrality of the EP in the Mass. Such a model places undue emphasis on the Offertory, and does not adequately correspond to the reality of two millennia of tradition in which the *Eucharistia* has taken place fundamentally in the anaphora. Another complication is that it reduces the nature of the EP to being primarily intercession and supplication, and less thanksgiving and praise (which we have seen from chapter one to be essential themes and modes of prayer in the anaphora.)

²⁶⁸ McGuckian notes the practice of inscribing, carving a cross into the hosts used for the Eucharist. Additionally, he notes that the use of the word “host” (*hostia*) was originally only used for a living thing, the sacrificial victim to be slaughtered. He quotes Theodore of Mopsuestia, who emphasizes that bread and wine prepared represent Christ’s body and shed blood, corporal is burial cloth, etc.

²⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, 37.

The final “act” in the model we have been considering is the one that is most relevant to the focus of this essay: the Communion, which represents the heavenly banquet. Christ’s sacrifice is complete when the members of His Body join in the eternal feast where the only food is God’s own self. The meal is not only essential, but is truly the culmination.²⁷⁰ This model makes clear that Cross and Resurrection are connected: sacrifice is the sacred meal (the heavenly banquet), death is the (albeit necessary) preparation. The sacrifice of Christ is made present throughout the Eucharistic liturgy. The sharing in the meal that takes place in sacramental Communion represents, makes present the heavenly wedding feast of the Lamb, the summit of the Son’s self-sacrifice (a topic we will address towards the conclusion of this essay.)

These contemporary approaches are but a few possible ways of understanding how Communion is truly essential to the Eucharistic sacrifice. In any case, Levering notes that the Church’s offering of Christ’s sacrifice culminates in the reception of the sacrifice. He states that Aquinas requires at least the priest to receive the sacrament because “the outward sacrifice he offers is a sign of the inner sacrifice whereby he offers himself to God...”²⁷¹

A PASTORAL PROBLEM: COMMUNION FROM THE TABERNACLE DURING MASS

We have already established that the most appropriate context of sacramental Communion is within the Eucharistic liturgy itself. We have also asserted that the Communion Procession is not only the ritual summit of the Mass but is also truly integral and essential to, indeed the culmination of, the Eucharistic sacrificial meal. In other words,

²⁷⁰ McGuckian emphasizes that early Christians called the Eucharistic liturgy simply “The breaking of the bread”, which indicated that the meal aspect was the culmination, the significant element of the sacrifice. (130)

²⁷¹ Levering, 105, citing Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 82, a. 4.

the Eucharistized bread and wine are intimately connected to the *Eucharistia* in which they are consecrated.

This is why the Church, officially since Benedict XIV, has called repeatedly for the assembly to Communicate from hosts (and presumably wine) consecrated at the Mass in which they participate, rather than from the reserved Sacrament.²⁷² Surely, there is an allowance for Communion from the tabernacle, as we believe Christ's presence in the reserved Sacrament abides as long as it retains the properties of bread. And the Eucharist participates in a heavenly reality that is "out of time" – our Eucharist today is always connected with those of the past and those of the future. This is why Benedict XIV can write: "They also participate in the same sacrifice to whom a priest distributes the Blessed Sacrament that has been reserved."²⁷³

However, the Holy Father also extolled the importance of the Communion of all from elements consecrated at that Mass:

The Church has not for this reason ever forbidden, nor does she now forbid, a celebrant to satisfy the piety and just request of those who, when present at Mass, want to become partakers of the same sacrifice, because they likewise offer it after their own manner, nay more, she approves of it and desires that it should not be omitted and would reprehend those priests through whose fault and negligence this participation would be denied to the faithful.²⁷⁴

Benedict affirms that receiving Communion from the elements "of the same sacrifice" is intimately connected to the offering that the assembly makes in the Eucharist. Kevin Irwin asserts that Benedict's appeal here is fundamentally aimed at strengthening the bond

²⁷² Cf. Benedict XIV, *Certiores effecti* (1742). Also cf. Martimort, 168, who notes that even in the Missal of Pius V itself, the reception of Communion by the faithful from among the hosts consecrated in that liturgy is presumed: "The priest...is to place the particles in a ciborium or, if only a few are to receive, on a paten..."

²⁷³ Ibid., 3.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

between the concepts of “sacrifice” and “sacrament”²⁷⁵, which we have by now established are complementary aspects of the one Eucharistic reality.

How lamentable it is that this practice of Communion from the tabernacle during Mass is still rather frequent - almost habitual - in many places. The ritual action of “breaking bread” is at least interrupted, if not “upstaged” by a mini-Eucharistic procession from the tabernacle to the altar of the ciborium of the Blessed Sacrament. Without diminishing the reality of Christ present in the reserved Sacrament, and allowing for the occasional emergency situation, the practice of regularly distributing “pre-sanctified” hosts puts sacramental Communion outside the overall arc of the Eucharistic liturgy that we have seen is one, continuous action. Thomas O’Laughlin explains how this practice disrupts the connection between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion, the more complete understanding of Eucharist as both sacrifice *and* meal:

The notion that there is a supply of particles...is a variant on the notion that the purpose of the Eucharist is to consecrate a sacred commodity. The emphasis is upon receiving “Holy Communion” – thought of as an object, a sacramental thing, a sacred stuff. Thus, the reality of the Eucharist as the action of thanksgiving of the whole Christ to the Father through the action of table sharing recedes into an academic background of abstract orthodoxy which little informs the actual imaginations of Christians.²⁷⁶

Surely to do otherwise requires advance planning, careful attention to the number of worshipers and hosts alike, and a willingness to honor the theological rationale supplied by the Church. This is why as recently as 2004, the magisterium restated the Church’s teaching on the issue in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, writing that “it is preferable that the faithful be able to receive hosts consecrated in the same Mass.”²⁷⁷ In this way, even by means of sign value,

²⁷⁵ Irwin, *Models*, 181-82.

²⁷⁶ Thomas O’Laughlin, “The Liturgical Vessels of the Latin Eucharistic Liturgy,” *Worship* 82, no. 6 (Nov. 2008): 499.

²⁷⁷ *Redemptionis sacramentum*, 89. Also Cf. *GIRM*, 85; *SC*, 55; *Eucharisticum mysterium*, 31.

it is clearer that Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion are intimately connected. In this way, sacramental Communion can clearly be the summit of the liturgy, the culmination of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

THE END IS THE BEGINNING

Communion (spiritual, ecclesial, *and* sacramental) should be the starting point for our understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice: the end is the beginning. "History is fulfilled in the eucharistic liturgy, and its *telos* is revealed to be nothing less than sharing in the heavenly liturgy through participation in the life of the Trinity."²⁷⁸ The eschatological dimension of the Eucharist comes to the fore.

Kilmartin brings meal and sacrifice together, and rightly underscores the principle of unity, which we have shown to be the purpose of the Eucharist itself. He says:

It is possible to begin with the notion of Communion in order to integrate the eschatological aspect of the eucharistic celebration into the proposed synthesis. This would take the eucharistic celebration as a sacramental sign of the heavenly banquet, and then demonstrate that Communion, sacrifice, and the sacramental somatic presence of the whole Christ are essential aspects of the one mystery of the Eucharist that ultimately consists in a Holy Communion of the crucified and risen Lord with his heavenly and earthly Church; and that all other effects of this celebration of the life of faith are included in this effect, namely the *res tantum sacramenti*.²⁷⁹

We will reflect briefly upon how the Communion Procession is meant to be an icon of this heavenly banquet, the "marriage feast of the Lamb." But first we must deal with the pastoral problem of "Communion without Eucharist", found in the increasing practice of Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, and the unfortunate occurrence of regular weekday "Communion services."

²⁷⁸ Levering, 176.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 352.

COMMUNION WITHOUT EUCHARIST

A central claim of this essay has been that the reception of sacramental Communion is most appropriate - one might even argue most fruitful - within the context of the Communion Procession, the summit of the Eucharistic liturgy. This is based on the vital connection between the EP and sacramental Communion which we developed in chapter two. This is also because sacramental Communion is the culmination of the Eucharistic sacrifice itself. We have already discussed at length the history of the reception of Communion by the faithful during Mass. We have seen that the distribution of the Eucharistic gifts to the assembly of the baptized has not always taken place within, or even connected to, Mass itself. There are still occasions on which Communion is regularly received apart from Mass.

From the early days of the Church, the Eucharistized bread was borne to those who were too sick (or otherwise unable) to participate in the Eucharistic liturgy. Scholars generally agree that the earliest purpose of reserving the consecrated bread was the Communion of the sick. *Viaticum* is another venerable practice by which the reserved Blessed Sacrament is distributed to those in danger of death, and has been part of the Church's life since the earliest days. It is also clear that early Christians took the consecrated gifts home to Communicate themselves during the weekdays between celebrations of the Lord's Day. (This practice, of course, pre-dates weekday celebrations of the Eucharist.)

More recent phenomena have developed by which Communion is received more outside of Mass with regularity. In some cases, it is because of the lack of a priest to preside for Sunday Mass. In others, it is part of a regular weekday "Communion service." The implications are different in these two instances. The pastoral demands compound the theological issues involved. My contention is that Sunday worship without a priest (and

therefore without a Eucharistic liturgy) in which Communion is received is an acceptable and appropriate practice, but with particular liturgical and catechetical requirements. In these situations, "the faithful are to understand that the eucharistic sacrifice cannot take place without a priest and that the eucharistic communion which they may receive in this kind of assembly is closely connected with the sacrifice of the Mass."²⁸⁰ At the same time, the lamentable practice of the weekday "Communion service" should be restricted to all but a few necessary situations for the true pastoral advantage of the faithful.

In this section of the present chapter, we will examine the theological and liturgical issues involved when sacramental Communion is separated from the Eucharist. This ritual action, while potentially pastorally advantageous, gives rise to theological questions: what are the implications of "Communion without Eucharist." We will begin by looking at the primacy of Sunday, the Lord's Day, *Dies Domini*.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

As early as Justin Martyr in about 150 A.D., Sunday is named as the day for the liturgical assembly. In his account of the early Eucharist, he states that "we all hold this common gathering on Sunday, since it is the first day, on which God transforming darkness and matter made the universe, and Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead on the same day."²⁸¹ It is clear that the Eucharist is fundamentally related to Sunday. In the decree on the recently released *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (hereafter SCAP), the CDWDS affirms: "Whenever the Christian community gathers to celebrate the eucharist, it shows

²⁸⁰ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, in *Liturgy Documentary Series, Volume 10: Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (Washington, D.C. USCCB, 1996), 23.

²⁸¹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67:3-7, as found in CDWDS, *Directory for SCAP*.

forth the death and resurrection of the Lord.”²⁸² Besides being the Day of the Resurrection, the first day of the week, it also comes to be understood as the “eighth day”, and takes on cosmic significance: Jesus’ resurrection represents the fullness of time. From the beginning, Christians always observed Sunday as a day of joy and feasting. With Constantine’s conversion, Sunday became a holiday in the Roman Empire. Theologically, Sunday and the Paschal Mystery were linked. In fact, because the celebration of Sunday pre-dates the feast of *Pascha* (which comes to be Easter), the common saying that every Sunday is a “little Easter” is probably more true in its inversion: Easter is a “BIG Sunday!”

Thus, the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is the highlight of the Christian community’s public life and the source of its identity. “This weekly celebration of Christians remains as a ‘sign’ of the salvific reality of the new creation that began with the resurrection of Christ. As a feast of the Christian assembly, a day of eucharistic celebration, and a day of Christian anticipation of what is to come, Sunday is indispensable, and no other day of the week can be substituted for it.”²⁸³

WEEKDAY EUCHARIST

By the early third century, some churches developed the custom of celebrating the Eucharist on certain weekdays in addition to Sunday. Nathan Mitchell notes that some weekday celebrations were attached to penitential days (as attested to by Tertullian) and some to the cult of martyrs (attested to by Cyprian.)²⁸⁴ Without judgment on the appropriateness of this historical development, it is clear that the exclusive relationship between Sunday and Eucharist was changing by the fourth century. Mitchell also notes that

²⁸² CDWDS, *Directory for SCAP*, 16.

²⁸³ Ibid, 15.

²⁸⁴ Mitchell, 29.

with weekday liturgies, the relationship between Eucharist and the events of Easter was changing.

With the advent of weekday Eucharistic liturgies, it also becomes conceivable (and pastorally necessary for accommodating growing numbers of crowds) that there would be multiple liturgies in one day. Simultaneously, as Christian communities grew, the Eucharist was celebrated by presbyters in addition to the bishop, in multiple locations. In all, the “one Sunday, one Eucharist” paradigm of the Apostolic era had fundamentally been altered.

Thankfully, Sunday retained its prominence in the Christian life. The Sunday Eucharist remains (via obligation AND by virtue of religious practice) the central element of Christian life, at least in the Catholic tradition. While other feasts and seasons commemorating elements of the Paschal Mystery (e.g. Incarnation, Ascension) developed and the cult of saints and martyrs became attached to weekday liturgies, Sunday remains primary. The norms of the liturgical year keep Sunday from being replaced by all but the most significant feast days.

SUNDAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST...IN EXPECTATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Since the middle of the twentieth century, parts of the world (including the United States) have experienced a serious decline in the number of priests, concurrent with an increase in the number of Catholics. In many parts of the country, there are parishes for whom the presence of an ordained priest on Sunday is rare. It could be once monthly, once every other month, or even still less frequent that a priest would be able to come to preside for the Sunday Eucharist.

Leaving aside the arguments about who can and cannot be ordained to presbyteral ministry, or which ministers should be able to preside for the Eucharist – and these are

serious questions, but for another essay - we are left with the problem of parishes for whom the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is seldom. These parishes are certainly those implied when the CDWDS writes: "When a priest cannot be present for the celebration of Mass on the Lord's Day, it is of paramount importance that the parish or mission community still come together to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord."²⁸⁵ The decree continues: "Even when Sunday Eucharist is not available, the community's gathering for worship preserves the sanctity of the Lord's Day, helps them to remain in the habit of assembling on Sunday, and prepares them for the time when there will be a priest to lead the community in the Sunday eucharist."²⁸⁶ It is made clear throughout the document that whenever "practical or possible", the community should join with another nearby community for the celebration of Mass. But there are still situations which require a celebration on Sunday other than the Eucharist.

The question then arises: what should such a celebration look like? The CDWDS has developed a ritual by which the community can gather for Sunday worship. It can take one of two forms. The first form presented is a celebration of one of the services of the Liturgy of the Hours (specifically morning or evening prayer), followed by an abbreviated Liturgy of the Word (using the readings and some orations from the missal for Sunday), and the Communion Rite, including the distribution of sacramental Communion reserved from a previous Mass. The second form is a Liturgy of the Word much like Mass that flows into a Communion Rite. The ritual book does not express an explicit preference of one form over the other; some may infer that because the Liturgy of the Hours is listed first, that it is the preferable option. We will discuss the merits of each possibility below.

²⁸⁵ CDWDS, *Directory* for SCAP, 18.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

The question of which form SCAP takes is interesting. As the Liturgy of the Hours is the proper daily prayer of the Church (ordained and lay alike) it is acceptable and even laudable that this precede sacramental Communion. This may even lead to the promotion of more communal celebrations of the Hours, which is, of course, pastorally desirable. In this form, the Sunday Liturgy of the Word takes place following the Psalmody.

The second form consists of introductory rites similar to Mass, followed by a liturgy of the Word, including Profession of Faith, Prayer of the Faithful, and an "Act of Thanksgiving." This is a familiar format for Catholics, so it may elicit more participation, and may put people more at ease than the first form.

In both forms a liturgy of the Word takes place immediately prior to Communion. This seems appropriate in light of the teaching of the Church that Christ is present not just under the forms of bread and wine, but also when the community gathers and in the Word proclaimed.²⁸⁷ Additionally, the proclamation of the scriptures from the Sunday Lectionary helps to reinforce the assembly's connection to the universal Church.

Besides the advantage of heightening awareness of the Liturgy of the Hours, the first form has the desirable effect of looking more different from Mass. Both forms of SCAP include a Liturgy of the Word that is much like Mass and a Communion Rite almost exactly like Mass. The form beginning with Liturgy of the Hours has a markedly different introductory rite than the simpler Liturgy of the Word version. In the former, there is an introductory verse and hymn, followed by psalmody and canticles. In the latter, there is an opening hymn, sign of the cross, and a collect prayer (although not a penitential rite or singing of the *Gloria*.) The similarity of this form to Mass could have the unfortunate consequence of obscuring the differences between this liturgy and the Eucharist.

²⁸⁷ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, in Flannery, 7.

The rite states that the “act of thanksgiving” after Communion would take the form of a prayer, litany, hymn, psalm, by which the faithful may give thanks for the Word of God and for the sacrament that they will soon receive or have just received. The rite clearly states: “In order to avoid all confusion between the eucharistic prayer of the Mass and the prayer of thanksgiving, used in these Sunday celebrations, these prayers of thanksgiving are not to take the form of a eucharistic prayer or preface.”²⁸⁸ This is preferred to a prayer with a structure similar to an anaphora, which would also obscure the fundamental reality that this is not a Eucharistic liturgy. However, the form that the directory allows is problematic. One possibility is that such a prayer of thanksgiving could take place with the reserved Blessed Sacrament still on the altar, or at least reserved in the tabernacle. In this case, the hymn or litany is “directed to Christ in the eucharist.”²⁸⁹ James Dallen rightly notes that this runs the risk of becoming a Eucharistic devotion, rather than a prayer of thanksgiving.²⁹⁰ The focus of this prayer would then be not so much praise and thanksgiving for the Paschal Mystery in a broad sense, but more of adoration for Christ present in his sacramental Body.

It is clear from the Roman congregation’s decree that the distribution of Communion during a Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest is expected under normal circumstances.²⁹¹ In this way, those who receive will be bound more closely to the Eucharistic sacrifice, and such a reception will lead to greater hunger for the Eucharistic liturgy itself, which is “the only true actualization of the Lord’s paschal mystery.”²⁹² The outline of the rite itself does list the distribution of Communion as optional (in parentheses), but in light of the aforementioned statement in the introductory decree, this seems to apply

²⁸⁸ USSCB, *Gathered in Steadfast Faith: Statement of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy on Sunday Worship in the Absence of a Priest in Liturgy Documentary Series, Volume 10: Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (Washington, D.C.: USSCB, 1996), 44.

²⁸⁹ CDWDS, *Directory for SCAP*, 45.

²⁹⁰ Dallen, 33.

²⁹¹ Cf. CDWDS, *Directory for SCAP*, 28.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 13, quoting Paul VI.

to situations in which there are an inadequate number of pre-sanctified hosts. I concur with the practice of Communion as normative in SCAP, as the reception of Communion in and of itself has great value (as we considered at the beginning of the present chapter.) While sacramental Communion has a proper context within Mass, it can stand on its own in circumstances such as this where the pastoral need of the faithful requires it.²⁹³ A crude analogy would be a steak and a steakhouse: one prefers the ambience, fine linen, cold beer, and service of a steakhouse for feasting upon a juicy cut. But, that does not mean the same steak eaten from a paper plate on a park bench is not satisfying.

The theological implications of Communion apart from the Sunday Eucharist become clearer when we compare the Mass with SCAP. The sacrificial dimension of Mass is barely present in the case of SCAP. Dallen quips: "What is missing [in SCAP, or anytime Eucharistic praying is separated from Eucharistic communion] is the organic unity between the sacrificial intention and the sacrificial meal. This is achieved only in the continuity of a single assembly engaged in the full eucharistic action."²⁹⁴ Dallen continues to note that the sacrifice is offered by both priest *and* people:

The early Christians did not risk death to receive communion but to do the memorial of the Lord's sacrifice on the Lord's Day. Had it been sufficient (or possible) for the priest to offer the sacrifice alone, and had it been enough for them to have communion privately at home, they would not have had to make themselves subject to capital punishment for the crime of gathering to celebrate the eucharist.²⁹⁵

Of course there are ecclesiological implications also: SCAP does not necessarily include prayers for the Church, the pope and bishop, the dead. While these may (and should) be part of the intercessory prayer, the intrinsic connection to the Eucharist is obscured.

²⁹³ The rite also directs that such a liturgy may take place only once in a community per Sunday, and only if there is NO Eucharistic liturgy on that day, no matter the time.

²⁹⁴ Dallen, 101.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 102.

Even when a deacon presides for SCAP, the reality that each parish is part of a Eucharistic community gathered around a bishop is made more difficult to grasp.

In short, these Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest – or, as I prefer to call them, in expectation of the Eucharist – are clearly a temporary measure. The USCCB Committee on the Liturgy made this perfectly clear:

The community is deprived of the celebration of the eucharist, and holy communion is separated from the Mass. There is a danger of returning to the situation of the past in which the Mass was seen only as a means for providing consecrated hosts for communion. The positive effects of the liturgical reform and renewal which have affirmed the Mass as the fount and summit of the Church's life are endangered by the practical need for these celebrations.²⁹⁶

WEEKDAY COMMUNION SERVICES

We have already seen that Eucharistic liturgies outside of Sunday are a later development in Christian history, but this does not diminish their validity or importance for the life of the Church. Sunday Mass remains the most important corporate act of the Church. Sunday is the day of the resurrection, of the Lord, of the Church, and of the Eucharist. Yet, the sanctoral cycle, the weekdays of the liturgical seasons, and ferial days all enrich the liturgical year; Mass held on Tuesday is still “source and summit” of the Christian life.

When, in parish or monastic communities, there is daily celebration of the Eucharist this is a fruitful practice and serves to build up the life of the Church. Both Paul VI and John Paul II have encouraged priests to celebrate Mass daily, and by extension for the faithful to participate. For its part, the USCCB clearly advocates that whenever possible, daily Mass should be offered in each parish.²⁹⁷ At the same time, it strongly discourages the distribution

²⁹⁶ USCCB, *Gathered in Steadfast Faith*, 62.

²⁹⁷ <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/q&a/general/weekday.shtml>, May 8, 2010

of Communion outside of Mass on a daily basis. The bishops direct that when daily Mass does take place in a parish, it is “usually not appropriate” to have a Liturgy of the Word and Distribution of Holy Communion.²⁹⁸ Their statement also asserts:

Whenever the *Rite for Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass* with a Celebration of the Word is scheduled on a weekday, every effort must be undertaken to avoid any confusion between this celebration and Mass. Indeed, such celebrations should encourage the faithful to be present at and to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist... [they] should never detract from the celebration of the Eucharist as the center of the entire Christian life. Such celebrations should never been seen as an equal choice with participation at Mass.²⁹⁹

When a small group of parishioners gather outside of the regular daily Mass for a “Communion service”, is their participation in the Eucharist directed towards the unity that is the very purpose of the sacrament? Or has the daily reception of Communion disconnected from the act of sacrificial offering and gracious praise become more of a pious devotional practice than a communal meal?

It seems clear that the magisterium has an aversion to weekday distribution of Communion outside of Mass. I contend this position is laudable in light of the vital link between Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic communion that is severed by regular distribution of Communion outside of Mass (except in the cases of the sick and dying.) Of course the occasional instance (e.g. a sick priest, scheduling mixup) will suggest that the appropriate pastoral response is a Liturgy of the Word and distribution of sacramental Communion. However, such a regular, scheduled practice is not appropriate. Further, it is even less appropriate for such a “Communion service” to take place on the same day in which Mass is also celebrated in that parish or one nearby.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

Another issue is that when Communion is received outside of Mass on Sundays or weekdays, it is usually only under the form of bread: the cup is not an option.³⁰⁰ While the Church's constant teaching is that Christ is wholly contained under either species (*concomitance*)³⁰¹, receiving Communion under both forms "more fully reflects the sacred realities that the Liturgy signifies."³⁰² The *GIRM* states: "For in this form the sign of the eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father's Kingdom."³⁰³ Despite the belief that the whole Christ is received under only one form, the significance of receiving the Precious Blood cannot be understated. Even though Communion under both forms is distributed regularly in the United States (and has been for the past forty years) many people still walk right past the cup each and every Sunday.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the reception of Communion outside of Mass is liturgically feasible, and sometimes even pastorally advantageous. However, such instances on Sunday are only in cases of legitimate need and lack of priests, and the distribution of Communion on weekdays is only to take place for serious reasons. Receiving Communion outside of Mass limits our awareness of Christ's manifold presence in the liturgical celebration, not just under the forms of bread and wine. Also, it runs the risk of gradually desensitizing the Christian community to the primacy of the Eucharistic liturgy itself. Mass cannot be simply a "means" for which

³⁰⁰ Of course, there are the exceptional cases of the sick and dying who cannot communicate under the form of bread. Otherwise, the Precious Blood cannot be reserved.

³⁰¹ Cf. Council of Trent, Session XIII.

³⁰² *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion*, 11.

³⁰³ *GIRM*, 281.

the Blessed Sacrament is the “end.” Mass is what gives the Christian community its cruciform identity. James Dallen says it well:

It is the celebration of the eucharist, not the reception of communion, that continues to establish and maintain the reality of the church. Those who have been, and commit to being, identified with Christ, do as he did: They take the bread and cup, bless God, and share the bread and cup. In so doing, they memorialize – become present to and are caught up in the reality of – Jesus’ meals during his ministry, his Last Supper and the meals his disciples continued to share with him after Easter. They have communion with Jesus’ person and with God’s redemptive action, not merely through the reality of Jesus’ presence in ‘transubstantiated’ bread and wine but through the reality of his presence in the total reality of the eucharistic *action*: taking, blessing, giving and receiving in a mutual sharing.³⁰⁴

COMMUNION AND THE HEAVENLY BANQUET

Having considered the pastoral problems of “Communion without Eucharist,” let us return to our arguments for the Communion Procession as the ritual “summit” within the Eucharist. I have alluded above to the fact that the distinction here is crucial. Rather than each individual enjoying their own “personal summit” with the reception of the Eucharistic elements, the Communion *Procession* – by its very communitarian nature – is the ritual summit.

That the Communion Procession is the summit of the Eucharistic liturgy is a lofty claim: it must bear the weight of the many dimensions of the Eucharist. Among these is the eschatological dimension that is inherent in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Because the Eucharist is a sacramental participation in and an anticipation of the heavenly banquet, the Communion Procession itself must represent that eternal feast in which the Lamb offers us a share in God’s own life. The Communion Procession should be an “icon” (albeit one in motion) of the heavenly banquet.

³⁰⁴ Dallen, 77-78.

We will begin with some brief reflections on icons, and then examine the relationship between the Eucharist and the heavenly banquet as described in the Old and New Testaments. We will then turn to an examination of the Communion Procession itself, to show that it has the liturgical function of being an icon of the heavenly banquet.

ICONS

Icons have long been an integral part of the Christian tradition. Despite controversies surrounding their use and potentially idolatrous nature, icons continue to play a vital role in the liturgical and devotional life of the Church. Icons are, first of all, related to the Incarnation. In his book *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, Robert Louis Wilken says: “The veneration of icons is the church’s most palpable way of proclaiming that God appeared in human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.”³⁰⁵ God’s interaction with the world (primarily through the Incarnate Word) is not simply intellectual or spiritual; in Jesus Christ, God dwells among us as one like us in all things but sin. In an icon of Christ one sees not simply the man Christ, but the “Logos become flesh.”³⁰⁶

The Eucharist, like the entire sacramental economy, is a celebration of the Incarnation. Roch Kerestzy has noted that the Gospel of John clearly connects the Incarnation and the Eucharist. “Thus, the whole mystery of Christ is summarized here in admirable simplicity: the goal of the saving incarnation is the Eucharist, and the goal of the Eucharist is humankind’s eschatological transformation.”³⁰⁷ By sacramental sharing in the very Body and Blood of Christ the God-Man, we are taken up into God’s own life.

³⁰⁵ Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 246

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 246, citing the Second Council of Nicaea

³⁰⁷ Kerestzy, 96.

Sacramental Communion is a unique mode of participation in this deification, a *theosis* that is our privilege because of the Incarnation.

Yet sacramental Communion should not be seen as an idol, as an “object,” just as God cannot be objectified as an idol. This was, of course, the heart of the controversy that faced John Damascene and others who argued for a more liberal interpretation of the Decalogue’s prohibition against “graven images.” In his analysis of the work of Jean-Luc Marion on icons, Robert Barron explains the difference between “idol” and “icon” for the Christian. In the case of the idol, the gaze of the viewer determines meaning. In an icon, the gaze of the icon determines the viewer.³⁰⁸ So too is the case with sacramental Communion: unlike ordinary food which is changed into us, the Body and Blood of Christ change us into Jesus himself. We are conformed more closely to Christ the Head and are drawn more deeply into his Body the Church.

Marion himself offers: “The icon alone offers an open face, because it opens in itself the visible onto the invisible, by offering its spectacle to be transgressed – not to be seen but to be venerated.”³⁰⁹ This is the power of the icon: to enable the invisible (that which is seen with the eyes of faith) to fill up, to (as Marion would say) “saturate” the visible.³¹⁰ Sacramental Communion has the same power: what appear to be but bread and wine are, in fact, and as perceived by faith, truly, really, substantially the Body and Blood of Christ. By Christ’s Word and His Spirit, the visible becomes saturated with the invisible.

With these general reflections upon icons and sacramental Communion as background, let us first examine what the scriptures offer us vis-à-vis the heavenly banquet

³⁰⁸ Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 61.

³⁰⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 19.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

that the Eucharist anticipates. This will lead us towards an analysis of the Communion Procession as an icon of this eternal feast of the Paschal Lamb.

EUCHARIST AND ESCHATOLOGY

“A sacrament is both cosmic and eschatological...it is cosmic in that it embraces all of creation, it returns it to God as God’s own...but it is to the same degree eschatological, oriented towards the *kingdom which is to come*.”³¹¹ With these words, Alexander Schmemmann rightly notes one of the essential, yet oft underemphasized dimensions of the Eucharist. It is one engagement in the tension of the “already-not yet” that is the life of the redeemed People of God. Like all sacraments, the Eucharist points towards the time when God will be all in all. The Eucharist is an anticipation of the heavenly banquet in which we will share in God’s own life.

Jean Danielou argues that the Eucharist is something of a liminal meal. In his opinion, the Eucharistic liturgy that Christ institutes in Luke 23:15 is not primarily about our worship in this world, but is rather first about the messianic banquet. He describes it thus: “The Pasch, eaten by Christ with His disciples before the Passion, is a figure of the messianic banquet to which Christ will invite His own in the Kingdom of the Father.”³¹² Therefore when we celebrate the Eucharist, we are caught up in both 1)the memorial of the Lord’s death and resurrection and, 2)the anticipation of the heavenly banquet. (One example of this was noted in chapter one, in how the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist comes to the fore in the intercessions section of the EP.) This is why the Post-Communion prayer for the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper links past and present so succinctly: “Almighty God, we receive new life from the supper your Son gave us in this world. May

³¹¹ Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 34.

³¹² Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1956) 168.

we find full contentment in the meal we hope to share in your eternal kingdom.”³¹³

Sacramental Communion is another ritual participation in this longing for “full contentment” in the kingdom of God.

Just as the Last Supper anticipates the heavenly banquet, the scriptures likewise anticipate both the Eucharist and the heavenly banquet itself. Proverbs 9 describes the feast of Wisdom, who calls out: “Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed!” (Prov 9:5-6) There is an invitation to come to this feast, at a table that has been spread (Prov 9:2), so that one may “advance in the way of understanding...for by me your days will be multiplied and the years of your life increased.” (Prov 9:11)

Isaiah sets the heavenly feast on the “mountain of the Lord.” Barron notes the significance of the mountain for the heavenly banquet: “The mountain is the place of right worship and cosmic peace, but it is also the locale of a magnificent meal...God’s festive meal shared with his holy people.”³¹⁴ The mountain is the place where Moses receives the Law. It is on the mountain where Jesus brings his disciples and is transfigured in a glimpse of glory. It is similarly on the mountain that the Lord will “provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy rich food and pure, choice wines.” (Is 25:6) This feast is intimately connected with eternal life. For on this same mountain (a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem), “he will destroy death forever.” (Is 25:7) Both Proverbs and Isaiah anticipate both the Eucharist and the heavenly banquet itself, but still in a limited way.

The New Testament concludes with the Book of Revelation, in which is described the “wedding feast of the Lamb.” (Rev 19:9) The image of Jesus as the “Lamb of God” is abundant in the Gospels: Jesus is the new Passover lamb of sacrifice. John acclaims Jesus in this way when he says: “Behold the Lamb of God!” In Christ, the New Law and the

³¹³ Post-Communion prayer, Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper, Roman Missal.

³¹⁴ Barron, *Eucharist*, 37.

Supreme Prophet, the sacrifice takes on new significance: "Jesus thus wanted them to ingest his sacrifice so as to appropriate it in the most intimate, organic way, making it bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh...the new law of the Gospel is efficacious because it is realized internally, through the identification of Christ and his body the church. And nowhere is this identification more complete than in the Eucharist, when a disciple physically consumes the incarnate Christ, the law *par excellence*."³¹⁵ In the meals of Proverbs and Isaiah, God provides wonderful food; Revelation makes it clear that this wonderful food is merely a foreshadowing of the real food of eternal life: Christ himself.

Revelation describes how "salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb." (Rev 7:10) "For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev 7:17) It is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who saves and gives life. Our sacramental sharing in the Paschal Lamb is a foretaste of the salvation promised by Christ Himself.

It is the Lamb who will give light to the City of God (Rev 21:23) and in fact, there is no temple in the city that John envisions: "its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb." (Rev 21:22) It is through Jesus, the Lamb of God, that we worship the Father. The Incarnation is again primary, as Revelation declares that "God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people..." (Rev 21:3) It is by Communion in His Body and Blood that we become one with the Lamb and one with the Father, and thus give praise and worship to God and the Lamb.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 88.

But it is the *wedding feast* of the Lamb – in which Christ gives Himself completely to us – that the Eucharist anticipates most clearly.³¹⁶ Revelation speaks of “the wedding day of the Lamb” as the fulfillment of God’s union with us. (Rev 19:7) Marital imagery is often used to describe the covenant between God in Christ and the Church (Gospel parables, Ephesians, etc.) and Revelation continues this nuptial image. The final book of the New Testament describes how when the old heaven and earth give way to the new, the Church will be “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev 21:2) Just like the union of wife and husband, bride and bridegroom, the union of Church and Christ is complete and total: it is of total self-giving. The union of Christ and the Church is celebrated by feasting and “blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.” (Rev 19:9) This marriage ceremony, this fulfillment of the Covenant, culminates in a feast assuredly like that described by Proverbs and Isaiah. This is why Pope Benedict XVI, in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, can write: “For us, the eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets and described in the New Testament as ‘marriage-feast of the Lamb’ to be celebrated in the joy of the communion of saints.”³¹⁷

From among these various descriptions of the heavenly banquet, what else can we gather about the nature of this eternal feast, this “wedding feast of the Lamb?” And how is the Communion Procession, as culmination of the Eucharistic liturgy, an icon of this heavenly banquet?

ICON OF THE HEAVENLY BANQUET

To begin with, the wedding feast of the Lamb is preceded by the blessing of God, a heavenly liturgy. Revelation writes that a great multitude in heaven acclaims: “Salvation,

³¹⁶ Cf. Kerestzy, 80.

³¹⁷ *SC*, 31, and Cf. Is. 25:6-9 and Rev. 19:7-9

glory, and might belong to our God..." (Rev 19:1) and "let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory." (Rev 19:7) Before the wedding feast can begin, God is blessed, praised, and glorified for His goodness. Also, the context of the eternal feast is clear: it is in a special place, on the mountain of God. This "mountain" is where we encounter God most fully; the Eucharist is our encounter with the sacramental fullness of God. We encounter God in assembly and minister, in Word proclaimed, as well as in sacramental food. In this light our argument for sacramental Communion's proper context within Mass is amplified.

In the heavenly banquet, there is an invitation: Wisdom prepares and invites (even spreads the table!), but we must come to the feast. The Communion Procession similarly begins with a ritual invitation: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away..." There is a similar invitation when the minister of Communion says to the recipient: "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ." This statement is purposely ambiguous. Not only is this eucharistized bread the Body of Christ, but so are all who receive it. As Augustine says, what is on the altar is us; we who are members of the Body of Christ by baptism are drawn more fully into the ecclesial Body by our sharing in His sacramental Body. The minister's invitation is not only to eat and drink, but to realize our own membership in the Body of Christ.

The Communion Procession itself shows our response to this invitation. The procession can surely take different forms, depending on the size of the assembly, number of ministers, and the layout of the space. What is important here is that Communion has a *processional* nature. Just as we are drawn and invited by Christ, we go like the bride prepared to meet the Lord. The Church is a pilgrim people, on our way from the "already" to the "not yet" and the Eucharist is "strength for those who journey in hope through this life and who

desire to dwell with God in the life to come.”³¹⁸ The Communion Procession must embody this pilgrim nature. It is important that as much as possible, Communion is distributed near the altar table, with people coming towards it. The Church is a community, with Christ as its center; in the same way, the Church at Eucharist is a community with the altar as its center. In the Communion Procession, our coming together to the Table of the Lord manifests the reality that through feasting upon the Paschal Lamb we are incorporated more fully into Christ.

The wedding feast, like the Eucharist, is a meal of self-giving. In this meal, Christ gives Himself completely to us. Sacramental Communion is *given* and *received*, never simply *taken*. The priest, sacramentally representing Christ, necessarily takes the consecrated bread and wine himself first. But, then he gives it to others, who may then give it to others. This is why the norms of the Church call for the *distribution* of sacramental Communion, not simply a “buffet line” in which one helps himself. Just like the heavenly banquet - in which the Lamb who was slain gives himself to us - sacramental Communion belongs to the order of gift.

The heavenly banquet includes both rich foods and choice wines (Isaiah 25): both are part of the feast without end. Even though the Church clearly teaches that Christ is wholly contained under either one of the Eucharistic species on its own, it also affirms that “Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth. Moreover there is a clearer expression of that will by which the new and everlasting covenant is ratified in the blood of the Lord and of the relationship of the Eucharistic

³¹⁸ USCCB, *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion*, 5.

banquet to the eschatological banquet in the Father's kingdom."³¹⁹ How unfortunate it is that after centuries of infrequent Communion and the restriction of the cup from the laity many still pass by the cup with indifference.

It is clear that the heavenly banquet is one of abundance: there is enough for all. Of course, the Eucharistic liturgy is merely a foretaste of this eternal feast, not the feast itself. A small piece of bread and a sip of wine will keep us hungry for the greater feast that is to come. Yet the foodstuffs and the vessels used, as well as the manner of eating and drinking, have symbolic ramifications and should point us in an iconic way towards God's abundance. "In a world of fast-food, this table fellowship must mark out a place of genuine human encounter; and in a world of deceptive appearance where the 'virtual' and the 'real' are presented as inter-changeable, everything connected with this meal must have a rugged authenticity. Alas our common tableware promotes a standardized attitude of speedy convenience, betrays a tokenism, and suggest that much of what we say is simply sounds."³²⁰

Perhaps most importantly, the Communion Procession must be an icon of the *communal* nature of the heavenly banquet. There is *one* heavenly banquet to which *all* are called. We have already dealt at length with the ultimate *res* of the Eucharist, that of the unity of the Body of Christ. The Communion Procession must manifest that the Eucharist is communal. It is unfortunate that in most cases, even with a small assembly, a loaf of broken bread has given way to individual wafers – the fundamentally communitarian nature of the Eucharist is obscured symbolically. When the priest has his own cup from which the assembly does not drink, the unity so central to the Eucharist can be ritually obscured by the Communion rite itself.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

³²⁰ O'Loughlin, 504.

There is no doubt that this communion is brought about by the union of each individual with Christ. Ratzinger emphasizes the *personal* nature of Communion when he writes:

Receiving Communion is always a personal act. It is never merely a ritual performed in common, which we can just pass off as we do with other social routines. In Communion I enter into the Lord, who is communicating himself to me. Sacramental Communion must therefore always be also spiritual Communion. That is why the Liturgy changes over, before Communion, from the liturgical 'we' to 'I.'³²¹

This is why it is important for each person to come to the liturgy properly disposed, and to spend time in prayer of thanksgiving to God after the Communion Procession.

But *personal* does not mean *individual*. The union with Christ that comes about for each one who receives the Eucharist is also the means of the unity of the whole Body of Christ. In 1964, Jungmann reflected upon the importance of the communal dimension of the Eucharist; his words are even more salient for us today:

The older ones among us have grown accustomed to the attitude that Holy Communion is a purely personal matter, that it concerns only the person who has just received the Lord's Body; and with this idea in mind *communion* was understood and explained in such a way that it meant merely the union of the individual with Christ, as though it were a *co-unio*. A great deal has been written about the idea of communion; but at any rate this much is certain: Communion does not refer to any kind of union, a meeting of two people, but a community, an alliance, the togetherness of many. The Church is such a community. The Church does not have communion with the saints, for she is herself a communion of saints. She is the *Communio Sanctorum*, and the *sacra communio* of the Eucharist is only a visible expression of it.³²²

So this silent prayer of thanksgiving after the reception of sacramental Communion properly takes place together, *communally*, after all have received Communion and the singing of the Communion song has ended. Until the procession has ended, we walk and sing

³²¹ Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 81.

³²² Joseph Jungmann, *The Eucharistic Prayer* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides, 1964), 61.

together in solidarity, in joy, in community with one another and with the entire Communion of Saints.

The *GIRM* points out that the purpose of this Communion chant is “to express the communicants’ union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to show joy of heart, and to highlight more clearly the ‘communitarian’ nature of the procession to receive Communion.”³²³ While the *GIRM* allows for the singing during Communion to be done by the choir alone (and there is certainly a liturgical precedent) it is more appropriate that the assembly participate in the singing, at least in a refrain or simple antiphon: only in this way can their voices be unified.

The singing during Communion should also give voice to the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. Gordon Truitt has noted that most songs in current hymnals focus on Christ present now, our call for Christ to transform the world through us, etc. Despite these important aspects of sacramental Communion, there is a need to emphasize the inherently eschatological dimension also. Truitt says: “In accord with the focus of the Communion Rite, we need more songs that will lead us forward, reaching completion only in the song of the vast crowd of witnesses: ‘Victory to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Rev 7:10)³²⁴

FUTURE BLESSINGS

The Communion Procession is an icon of the heavenly banquet in many ways. But, above all, it manifests the reality that God has chosen to make a new and everlasting covenant through the death and resurrection of the Incarnate Word, who gives us a share in God’s own life through our sharing in his sacramental Body and Blood. God ratifies this

³²³ *GIRM*, 87.

³²⁴ Gordon Truitt, “The Wedding Feast Has Begun,” *Pastoral Music* 34, no. 4 (May 2010) 38.

covenant with a banquet that has no end, but for now, the cosmic and eschatological sacrament of the Eucharist will have to suffice. The Communion Procession, as the ritual summit of the Eucharistic liturgy, manifests the banquet of the Lamb which will last forever. As Jean Danielou puts it: "Indeed as long as we are in this world, it is by the holy flesh and precious blood that we communicate in Christ in a way that is still imperfect. But when we have come to the day of His power and have gone up into the splendor of the saints, we shall be sanctified in another way known to Him who distributes future blessings."³²⁵

³²⁵ Danielou, 169.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this essay, I have argued that the EP is the “center” and “heart” of the Mass not simply because it contains Jesus’ words of institution and is associated with the transformation of the Eucharistic elements, but because it conforms to Jesus’ command to give thanks to the Father. We have seen that this great Trinitarian and doxological prayer of praise and thanksgiving gives voice to the fullest understanding of the Eucharist, situating the Christological IN within its anamnestic, epicletic, and ecclesial context.

We have seen how Mass, including the EP and the entire Liturgy of the Eucharist, is wholly directed towards the Communion Procession. It is clear that even in the texts of the EP, the sacramental Communion of the faithful and the fruits that result are of importance.

The third chapter established that on these grounds, the Communion Procession is the ritual summit of the Eucharistic liturgy. We have explored the scriptural and theological warrants for this claim. We have argued for this because it is the rightful conclusion of one continuous ritual action of *Eucharistia*. We have demonstrated that sharing in the sacrificial offering is both integral and essential to the Eucharistic sacrifice, indeed its culmination. We have seen that the reception of Communion apart from Mass can risk separating praying and Communion – two interdependent aspects of one Eucharistic reality. We know that the Communion Procession, to be the ritual “summit”, must be an icon of the heavenly banquet, in which God is all in all.

Now, by way of conclusion, we again turn to the texts of the Liturgy itself to reinforce that sacramental Communion deepens, intensifies, and perfects the unity that is the

purpose of the Eucharist itself. The post-Communion prayers of the Roman Missal testify to the connection between sacramental Communion and unity. Lawrence Johnson rightly notes: "The prayer after the Communion is not a prayer of thanksgiving; this is rather the nature of the EP, particularly in its Preface. It [the post-Communion] is a prayer asking for the spiritual effects or fruits of the Eucharist."³²⁶ This prayer expresses the desire that God will make the Eucharist, especially its sacramental reception, fruitful.

There are many themes present in these post-Communion prayers, and they largely vary by season. The post-Communion prayers of the seasons of Advent and Christmas have strong themes of preparation and gratitude (respectively) for the Incarnation, which we established above as the foundation of the whole sacramental life. The prayers of Lent are naturally concerned with the Sacrifice of the Cross and the forgiveness of sins that takes place in the Eucharist, especially by the reception of Communion. But even in these prayers of a season which has its own focus, there is a connection with the overall theme of unity. For example, during Lent, forgiveness of sins is linked with unity and peace: "Lord, forgive the sins of those who receive your sacrament, and bring us together in unity and peace." (Third Sunday of Lent) The prayer for the Fifth Sunday of Lent connects sacrifice and union with Christ through sacramental Communion: "By this sacrifice may we always remain one with your Son, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood we share..." Of course, the prayers of the Easter season express the joy of the eternal life gained by the Resurrection of the Son: the heavenly banquet where all will sing praise to the Lamb and feast on God's own Self.

When we turn to the post-Communion prayers of Ordinary Time, we find a strong emphasis on the theme of unity as a primary fruit of Eucharistic Communion. In this season, no one aspect of the Paschal Mystery is highlighted above others: we celebrate the work of

³²⁶ Johnson, *Mystery of Faith*, 124.

our salvation in the most comprehensive way. For this reason, the prayers of Ordinary Time speak best to the Eucharist in the broadest sense. And these prayers, especially those after Communion, are clear that the Eucharist is about the unity of the Body of Christ.

Additionally these prayers help express our belief that sacramental Communion is never individualistic: it always has a communal dimension and is directed towards the unity of the Body of Christ. As we have asserted many times above, sacramental Communion deepens each recipient's union with Christ; so in this way, it is profoundly *personal*.³²⁷ Yet, it is always *communal*. Roguet says it well:

Some pious people may have frequent recourse to the Holy Eucharist as a sacrament of their individual progress, of their personal intimacy with Jesus, in which they seek a more or less dreamy satisfaction of a certain ideal. Those who use the Holy Eucharist in this way, however devout they may be, only partially understand it. Holy Communion ought not only to unite us to God by Jesus and in him. It should unite us to the people of God, strengthen and enliven our union with our brethren. That is why the sacrament is not celebrated in private and in silence, but in the popular rejoicing of a family banquet in the hymns of the Church's liturgy.³²⁸

Throughout the post-Communion prayers, unity and peace are expressed as complementary fruits of Eucharistic communion: "Lord, may this Eucharist accomplish in your Church the unity and peace it signifies." (Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time) "Lord, as we receive the sacrament of unity, help us live together in your household united in mind and heart. May we experience the peace we preach to others and cling to the peace we receive in the eucharist." (Mass for Promoting Harmony) This peace is bound up with the work of just living and care for the least among us, which are always at the heart of the Eucharist. William Cavanaugh warns against "Eucharistic triumphalism": "The fact that the church is literally changed into Christ is not a cause for triumphalism, however, precisely

³²⁷ Recall Ratzinger's emphasis on sacramental Communion as a "personal" act in *God Is Near Us*.

³²⁸ A-M. Roguet, *Christ Acts Through the Sacraments*, Carisbrooke Dominicans, trans. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1953), 83.

because our assimilation to the body of Christ means that we then become food for the world, to be broken, given away, and consumed.”³²⁹ Kerestzy concurs, and emphasizes that receiving sacramental Communion is a pledge of mutual love for the rest of the Body of Christ:

We can receive Jesus’ gift of himself only to the extent that...we also become a gift through Jesus to the Father and nourishing ‘food and drink’ for our fellow humans. The widespread, passive, consumerist attitude toward Holy Communion with which we abuse Christ by trying to possess him and ensure the ‘benefits’ of his redemption for us need to be eradicated...the theocentric and ecclesial-communitarian aspect of Holy Communion are interdependent and both should shape concrete forms of its celebration.³³⁰

Just as in the second epicleses of the EPs, the Spirit is the agent of unity, which leads towards peace and love: “Lord, you have nourished us with bread from heaven. Fill us with your Spirit, and make us one in peace and love.” (Second Sunday of Ordinary Time) Mazza echoes his emphasis on the Spirit as the agent of unification in the Eucharist when he warns against individualistic tendencies:

If the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity, its fruits influence the entire community. This is not to play down personal participation; it is simply to say that the individual benefits from the Eucharistic as a member of the community and in function of the community’s growth. A community that does not grow in unity, or that grows only slowly and as it were gropingly (as with all human growth), is a community that does not derive good fruit from the eucharistic celebration, that is, from the action of the Holy Spirit, which consists in uniting all in the one body of Christ. Such a community does not respond to the work of the Spirit and is therefore guilty of profaning the body of Christ.³³¹

Even the Votive Mass of the Holy Eucharist is concerned with unity: “Lord, may our sharing at this holy table make us holy. By the body and blood of Christ join all your people in brotherly [*sic*] love.” Ultimately, this unity of the Body of Christ – head and members - is

³²⁹ William Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 232.

³³⁰ Kerestzy, 194.

³³¹ Mazza, *Prayers*, 120, based on Trent Session XIII (1551), cap 8 (DS 1649) and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2 (in Flannery, 453.)

about true charity and mutual love for one another. "Lord, bring to perfection within us the communion we share in this sacrament. May our celebration have an effect in our lives."

(Third Sunday of Ordinary Time) This effect is chiefly that those who receive the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ would grow in love and serve each other more like Jesus: "Lord, you renew us at your table with the bread of life. May this food strengthen us in love and help us to serve you in each other." (Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time)

Matthew Levering aptly states the mutually dependent relationship between unity and charity in the Eucharist: "Since the *res* or reality of the Eucharist is charity, by participating in the sacrament of the Eucharist, believers are inflamed with charity and become more deeply united."³³²

In conclusion, we have seen that the post-Communion prayers of the Eucharistic liturgy help reinforce our understanding of the fruits of sacramental Communion within the Eucharist. With Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, and others, Pope Benedict XVI can say that the Eucharist is about the unity of the Body of Christ and sacramental Communion is a participation in that unity:

Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become 'one body', completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbour are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself.³³³

IMPLICATIONS

If sacramental Communion is the "summit" of the liturgy, then that necessarily means that nothing else can be described that way. For a "summit" is the "peak", the

³³² Matthew Levering, "Liturgical Mediation: Help or Hindrance to the Unity of the People of God?" *Assembly* 35, no. 4 (July 2009), 53, citing Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 79, a. 4.

³³³ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2006), 14.

“apex”, the “highpoint.” Thus, I contend that the *CCC* is accurate in saying that the Mass itself is “wholly directed” towards the Communion Procession.

This does not detract from the centrality of the Eucharistic Prayer, the “heart” of the Eucharistic liturgy. It is in the Eucharistic Prayer that the Church, having encountered Christ present in the Word, engages most fully in the task of thanksgiving and anamnesis. All that comes before is directed towards the Eucharistic Prayer, and from this central prayer flows the graces of sacramental Communion, which brings about the unity of the Body of Christ.

As the Church continues to unpack the mystery of the Eucharist, it will be important to continue to uphold the primacy of these two cardinal elements of the Mass, and their complementary nature. All catechesis on the Eucharist should include a discussion of the vital link between these two aspects of one sacramental mystery. Additionally, as future editions of the *GIRM* and catechism are published, serious consideration should be given to the way in which the Communion Procession is described in relationship to the Eucharistic Prayer. Finally, no discussion of the Eucharist should fail to include, if not emphasize, that unity is the ultimate *res* of the sacrament. By our Eucharistic praying and Eucharistic Communion, may the Church be bound more closely together with its Head, and so advance on the way to salvation.

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