



Saint Clare of Assisi

CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE SHAPE OF OUR LITURGY WEEK THREE: EUCHARIST

Eucharist as the Word enacted and embodied

Models of the Eucharist by Kevin Irwin

“What we do in our solemn assemblies does matter, and conducting rites carefully and reverently does indeed matter. But more emphasis on the way liturgy shapes our view of reality, how it challenges us to look at life from the perspective of Christ’s dying and rising and our dying and rising through, with, and in him is really the heart of the matter. If this becomes our focus, then the liturgy can be put in proper perspective, because one of its purposes is to enable us to put nothing less than life into perspective. Liturgy is a means to the ever elusive goal of church renewal, of communal self-transcendence, and of becoming ever more committed witnesses to God’s rule and kingdom in our world” (27).

Cosmic Mass

“...every act of liturgy—especially that of the Eucharist—is an expression and experience of that which is most sacred (God, redemption, forgiveness, etc.) through that which is most available to us (the things on and of this good earth). ...every act of liturgy has its effects on the whole cosmic sweep of the world’s salvation and on the personal sanctification of those who participate in it or who are remembered through it” (40).

The Church’s Eucharist

“What is accomplished by God and hopefully what is appropriated by the church *in and through* the liturgy is nothing less than the work of our being redeemed by God. Synonyms for the redemption “worked” at liturgy are initiating us into the very life of God at baptism, deepening the salvation first experienced at baptism in other sacraments, sanctifying us by allowing us again and again to experience God as the most sacred of all realities, forgiving those things that prevent us from living the fullness of the life of God, strengthening our faith as the ‘pilgrim church on earth,’ experiencing the justice of God in what is often an unjust world, and being healed in the myriad ways only God can offer us. ...the liturgy is always about redemption gained for us once for all in Christ, a redemption experienced here and now in and for the church through the celebration of the liturgy. Precisely because it is *liturgical*, the redemption celebrated is always communal, for and with the whole church. Liturgy is not a private devotion for personal sanctification only. It is about nothing less than the church’s very identity and vocation—as the redeemed of and in Christ.” (68).

Effective Word of God

The biblical background of ‘making memory’ means that when we engage in the liturgy—by both word and sacramental action—God does something. God acts on our behalf. Through liturgical memorial we are drawn into God’s eternal act of salvation, re-creation, and redemption. ...we are healed and strengthened both by the proclaimed word and by sacramental communion. Our, to put it in a more integral way, we receive sustenance from

the word and the altar table, two parts of one act of worship, two complementary ways of receiving God's act of salvation in the Eucharist" (102, 111).

Memorial of the Paschal Mystery

"Through the unique medium of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, what occurs is that the dying and rising of Christ and *our dying and rising* through, with, and in him are made real and engage us here and now. ...In liturgical memorial we are not going back in history; rather history becomes contemporaneous with us, provides us with a privileged and graced event of salvation here and now, and gives us a glimpse of what will happen when 'all will be in all' and the kingdom of God will have come finally and fully" (123, 127).

What 'we remember' is what God did in Christ; what we do in the Eucharist is allow our lives to be reshaped and reformed in that image and likeness. ...when the dying and rising of Christ is the prism through which we look at life, through which we reevaluate ourselves, our lives, and everything in them, then we can say that the paschal mystery becomes the true measure of who we are and what we are about." (142).

Covenant Renewal

"...the Eucharist renews and deepens the conversion first forged, signed, and sealed among and for believers through the waters of baptism. ...we have responded and continue to respond to God's invitational word and grace in our own personal and communal conversion. In a real sense, the Christian life (even for those baptized as infants) is always about 'covenant-making' and 'covenant-keeping.' In the very celebration of the Eucharist the church offers us the opportunity to recommit ourselves to God's covenant—in hearing and obeying the word of the Lord and in celebrating the eucharistic action. The Eucharist is thus a sign of our conversion to the covenant and a means for that covenant to be renewed in our lives" (147, 166).

The Lord's Supper

"The consummation of the eucharistic sacrifice is our participation in the ritual of communion—literally our taking part in the Mass through taking communion in common. The act of taking the Eucharist is always an act of giving and receiving. This reflects the theology of the Eucharist itself—that we who communicate and partake in the Eucharist do so at God's gracious and continual invitation. We come to receive from the Lord what makes us draw ever closer to him. In the end, the act of communion underscores what every act of Eucharist is—a sharing in the Lord's Supper" (193).

Food for the Journey

"What the liturgy is, therefore, is the *unique and privileged* experience for the church of God's kingdom among us. As such it is irreplaceable. Without it we cannot live the life of God. It is the supreme moment for the church's self-realization on earth of what it hopes to be drawn into at the end—the community of the finally and fully redeemed in the kingdom of heaven forever. But, at the same time, the liturgy is also *promissory* and *provisional*. It is promissory in the sense that it is God's 'down payment' on what we will experience in its fullness in the kingdom. It leads to that final consummation and final reality. It is provisional, and Christ's real presence, as 'really real' as it can be, is also provisional, because this real presence—especially through the enactment of the Eucharist—leads to its completion at the

'supper of the Lamb.' ...The food that we take as 'food for the journey' is essentially a food that we share as brothers and sisters of each other in faith. All liturgical prayers remind us that we are not alone. Hence, any eschatological emphasis in the Eucharist is a communal eschatology. It is not about 'my judgment' or about 'my salvation' only. It is about our being a part of the community that stands in need of complete redemption in and through Christ." (201, 209).

Sacramental Sacrifice

"...what we do in the act of *anamnesis* of the past, present, and future dimensions of Christ's paschal victory leads to the here-and-now offering by the church of this unique gift of redemption. What was accomplished once for all is not only made present, it is actualized and operative among us through the liturgy. ...Our participation in the sacrifice of Christ is made possible only by sharing in the Eucharist, a sacred meal in which the covenant is renewed, reconciliation with God is accomplished once more, and we are joined with the paschal dying and rising of Christ. The Eucharistic sacrifice is always the sacrifice of Christ, the unique mediator of our salvation, a salvation accomplished in his paschal history. The Eucharist is the church's act of sacrifice—it is never that of an individual, even the priest, for he acts in the Eucharist...*in persona Christi captious ecclesiae* ('in the person of Christ, the head of the church')" (229,233).

Active Presence

"...what we experience through the liturgy is more than any one or even all the historical events of Jesus' life. What we experience is the totality of who Christ was, what he came to accomplish, and who he is forever. In celebrating the liturgy we do not parcel out one or another aspect of his paschal mystery, e.g., suffering on Calvary, empty tomb in the garden. Liturgy is always about the whole event and experience of Christ. At the same time, liturgy is always paschal—it is always about the entirety of the paschal life mystery of Christ and by its very celebration we are incorporated into those self-same saving mysteries here and now. ...The threefold reference to Christ himself being active in and through offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, in the Liturgy of the Word, and in the sacraments ('it is really Christ himself who baptizes,' 'it is himself who speaks...') is also significant theologically, first because it reminds the ordained minister that he acts in the person and name of Christ—not on his own in any way—and second because it contextualizes the discussion of *presence* by linking it intrinsically to the liturgy. The point here is that presence should not be understood in any sense as passive. Christ is active when present, and when he is active in and through the liturgy we can say that he is present in a unique and special way. ...What this active presence requires of those who celebrate the eucharistic liturgy is attentiveness and the kind of participation that hopefully will lead us to reflect and witness to the presence of Christ in our lives in manifold and untold ways" (243, 258, 261).

Work of the Holy Spirit

"If it can be said that 'all liturgy is paschal,' it can also be said that 'all liturgy is done by the power of the Holy Spirit.' The restored *epiclesis* in the eucharistic prayers makes this obvious. ...The prayers specifically speak to the reality of the wider church always needing to be drawn more fully into the unity that Christ willed for the church. In the end, the epicletic invocations about church unity demand that we seek to live lives in communion

with each other, a communion initiated at baptism and sustained by eucharistic participation. Liturgy is never about *me*; it is always about *us*. The heart of liturgical ministry and liturgical participation is that we, together, make up the body of Christ and minister to the church in and through the Eucharist. But we are also challenged, every time we celebrate the Eucharist, to live what we have celebrated and to ensure that the way we live our lives is for the building up and ever deepening unity of the pilgrim church on earth. Since every act of Eucharist is the celebration of 'the mystery of faith' that deepens and renews our faith, it is a mystery that we can participate in only at the invitation and through the ever sustaining power and love of God's Holy Spirit. ...One of the values of appreciating the Eucharist as the 'work of the Holy Spirit' is that it emphasizes the always self-transcending character of the Christian life, ritualized in the Eucharist and ever yet to be realized fully in our lives in the church" (288-299).

Liturgy of the Eucharist 40:23-54:30 (14 min)

Address from Bishop Barron to the Adoremus Eucharistic Congress and Pilgrimage in Liverpool. Saturday morning, 8 September 2018

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPR2u6NkZeU>

Presentation of the gifts and preparation of the altar

We gather and bring forward gifts for the sacrifice (bread, wine, water, money)

Giving is a liturgically important moment—when we give of our own means, it costs us something—blood, sweat, tears, could be used for something else, act of sacrifice

Bread and wine symbolize everybody and everything, the whole of the universe: the work of human hands and the stuff of all creation, all of creation coming to the moment of *ad oratio*.

Prayer over the offerings

The *berakah* (blessed Lord God of all creation...)

This is not about satisfying God for our benefit

- Feeding of the five thousand—when we give in a great act of sacrificial offering to God, what he does not need, he elevates and multiplies it for the feeding of the world.
- Elevated, transfigured, for the spiritual feeding of the world

Eucharistic prayer

The introductory dialogue (*sursum corda*—"lift up your hearts")

Establishes this prayer as the prayer of the baptized and ordained, is offered in the presence of God, and has thanksgiving as its central focus.

Preface

The *thanksgiving* is expressed in the preface in which the priest, in the name of the whole of the holy people, glorifies God the Father and gives thanks to him for the whole work of salvation or for some particular aspect of it, according to the day, festivity, or time of year.

Holy, Holy, Holy (*Sanctus*)

The acclamation by which the whole congregation, joining with the heavenly powers, sings the *Sanctus* (*Holy, Holy, Holy*). This acclamation, which constitutes part of the Eucharistic Prayer itself, is pronounced by all the people with the Priest.

Epiclesis

The church implores the Holy Spirit that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become Christ's body and blood, and that the unblemished sacrificial victim to be consumed may be for the salvation of those who will partake of it.

Institution narrative and consecration

By means of the words and actions of Christ, that sacrifice is effected which Christ himself instituted during the Last Supper, when he offered his body and blood under the species of bread and wine, gave them to the apostles to eat and drink, and left with them the command to perpetuate this same mystery.

The eucharist is a word event (*via verborum*—by the power of the words)

- Even our puny words can change reality—cruelty and kindness
- God actually speaks things into being. Our language tends to be passive and descriptive. God's is active and creative. God's words shape reality.
- Jesus is the word made flesh. What Jesus says, is: *this is my body, this is the chalice of my blood* (real, true, and substantial presence in the Eucharist).

Institution begins in third person, shifts to first person. In that moment the priest is *in persona Christi*, and the words have transformative power (the climax of the mass).

- Head and members knitted together, offering the father this adoring sacrifice, presenting to the father, the son, and all of us united with Christ the head
- The moment of supreme adoration, the moment we become properly aligned, when creation is knitted back together
- Any sacrifice we make breaks against the rock of the divine self-sufficiency and comes back to us. That sacrifice now feeds us with the body and blood of Jesus.

Anamnesis (memorial acclamation/mystery of faith)

The church, fulfilling the command from Christ the Lord through the apostles, celebrates the memorial of Christ, recalling his passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

Oblation

The church, in particular that gathered here and now, offers the unblemished sacrificial victim in the Holy Spirit to the Father. The faithful not only offer this unblemished sacrificial victim but also offer their very selves, and so are brought, through the mediation of Christ, into unity with God and with each other, so that God may at last be all in all.

The intercessions

Expression is given to the fact that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, of both heaven and of earth, and that the oblation is made for her and for all her

members, living and dead, who are called to participate in the redemption and salvation purchased by the body and blood of Christ.

Concluding doxology

The glorification of God is expressed and which is affirmed and concluded by the people's acclamation "Amen."

The communion rite

The Lord's Prayer

Jesus taught this prayer to his disciples when they asked how to pray (Mt 6:9-13, Lk 11:2-4). In this prayer, the people join their voices to pray for the coming of God's kingdom and to ask God to provide for our needs, forgive our sins, and bring us to the joy of heaven.

Sign of peace

The celebrant prays that the peace of Christ will fill our hearts, our families, our church, our communities, and our world. As a sign of hope and expression of reality of the body of Christ, the people extend to those around them a sign of peace.

Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*, the fraction)

The celebrant breaks the consecrated bread as the people sing the *Agnus Dei* or "Lamb of God." John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). The action of breaking the bread recalls the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, when he broke the bread before giving it to his disciples. One of the earliest names for the Eucharistic celebration is the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:35; Acts 2:42, 46).

Communion

The celebrant and assembly acknowledge their unworthiness to receive so great a gift. The celebrant receives Holy Communion first and then the people come forward.

Because sharing at the eucharistic table is a sign of unity in the body of Christ, only those in communion with the Catholic Church may receive Holy Communion. Those who do not receive may still participate in this rite by praying for unity with Christ and with each other.

The people approach the altar and, bowing with reverence, receive Holy Communion. People may receive the body of Christ either on the tongue or in the hand. The priest or other minister offers the Eucharist to each person saying, "The body of Christ." The person receiving responds by saying, "Amen," ("so be it").

As the people receive Holy Communion, the communion chant/song is sung. The unity of voices echoes the unity the Eucharist brings. All may spend some time in silent prayer of thanksgiving as well.

Prayer after communion

The communion rite ends with the prayer after communion which asks that the benefits of the Eucharist will remain active in our daily lives.