

ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGIES OF EUCHARISTIC COMMUNION: A CONTRIBUTION TO ECUMENICAL CONVERSATION

DAVID N. POWER, O.M.I.

Catholic University of America

IN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE with representatives of other churches, Roman Catholic participants have generally been able to subscribe to mutually agreed statements on issues such as eucharistic memorial, eucharistic presence, and even eucharistic sacrifice. A fruitful approach has been to situate definitions and confessions in their historical context, both doctrinal and practical, so as to promote understanding of the real concern and horizon of the doctrine. The limitations of a particular doctrinal formulation, when related to foundations in Scripture and tradition and when interpreted relative to its own time and to these foundations, can then be superseded while doing justice at the same time to its truth and its concerns.¹

Ecumenical conversations, however, have moved by and large beyond accounting for differences on controverted issues to a common renewal of eucharistic theology that may rest upon a different foundation. In many cases, what is suggested is a theology of *koinonia*, communion, which considers the Church's participation in the *koinonia* of the Trinity through Eucharist and looks at this in light of the missions of Word and Spirit in the economy of redemption.²

The most significant contribution to this development comes from the appropriation of elements from Eastern Christian practice and theology, with stress on the Eucharist in the local church, the action of the Holy Spirit, and the ground of all eucharistic theology in the rite of celebration taken as a whole unit.³ Not surprisingly, the use of the

¹ For a critical comment on failure to do this, see Henry Chadwick, "Unfinished Business," in *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity*, ed. Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold (London: SPCK/CTS, 1994) 211–21.

² On what is common and what is ambiguous in the notion of *koinonia*, see A. Birmelé, "Status quaestionis de la théologie de la communion à travers les dialogues oecuméniques et l'évolution des différentes théologies confessionnelles," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 14 (1995) 245–84. See also WCC Faith and Order Commission, "Towards *Koinonia* in Worship," *One in Christ* 31 (1995) 71–100; Thomas Best and Günther Gassmann, ed., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, Faith and Order Paper 166 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994).

³ See the Munich statement (1982) of the International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity," in *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, ed. John Borelli and John H. Erickson (Crestwood: N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary; Washington: USCC, 1996) 53–64;

image of koinonia has also influenced other dialogues in which the Roman Catholic Church participates.⁴

Among ecumenical conversations between Western churches, the international Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue is perhaps the most interesting in this regard, especially in the three phases of addressing agreement on the Eucharist. The first phase has pointed to common foundations that serve as a basic agreement and resolution of differences on such points as sacrifice and presence.⁵ The second phase, against the context of the disputes of the 16th century, has presented the theologies of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the Council of Trent as important differences in explanation that could however relate to the profession of the one, fundamental, eucharistic faith.⁶ In the third phase, where reference to the Eucharist was introduced into doctrinal discussion on Church and justification, a theology of koinonia has been presented as the context for better understanding eucharistic doctrine and practice.⁷

The meaning given to koinonia in various ecumenical conversations is not without some ambivalence, but it does offer an avenue of research and reflection that may lead to greater unity. While an invisible factor of communion in faith and charity in common adherence to Christ and to the Spirit seems often taken for granted, attention is drawn to the external or visible elements of communion found within a given church or between churches. Individual churches, or churches in relation to one another, can be said to have communion in one professed faith, or in one commonly recognized baptism. Some communion in prayer, service, and mission can also exist.

The Orthodox contribution to eucharistic agreements does most to relate this visible communion and what it signifies to the koinonia of the divine Trinity as manifested in the history of salvation and in the

also reproduced in *Origins* 12 (August 12, 1982) 157–60, and *One in Christ* 2 (1983) 188–98. Also Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue, "Moscow Statement, 1976," in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Mayer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist; Geneva: WCC, 1984) 41–49, at 45–46.

⁴ See, e.g., "Toward a Statement on the Church: Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council 1982–86 (Fourth Series)," *One in Christ* 22 (1986) 240–59, at 247; Introduction to the Final Report, *Anglicans and Roman Catholics* 15–18; "International Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic Dialogue: Report on the Second Phase, 1983–1992," *Information Service of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity* 86 (1994) 162–69.

⁵ "The Eucharist: Final Report of the Joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission, 1978," in *Growth in Agreement* 190–214.

⁶ *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*, ed. Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 84–117.

⁷ Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Study Commission, "Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification," no. 3.3, *Information Service of the Secretariat for the Promoting of Christian Unity* 86 (1994) 128–81, at 142–43.

eucharistic liturgy.⁸ As the International Roman Catholic/Orthodox statement published at Munich in 1982 puts it, the Church is the “sacrament of the Trinitarian koinonia,” and this identity is most fundamentally realized where the “eucharistic celebration makes present the Trinitarian mystery of the Church.” Some statements of agreement add that the communion of the Church, precisely because rooted in that of the Trinity, is, in God’s design, intimately related to the communion of all humankind.⁹

KOINONIA IN ROMAN CATHOLIC EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY

The contribution of Odo Casel in retrieving anamnesis or memorial as the key to the doctrine of the Eucharist is well known, as are the controversies surrounding his way of achieving this. What endures in Roman Catholic theology today is the idea of a sacramental reenactment of the mysteries of Christ. This has indeed helped ecumenical conversations to a considerable degree.¹⁰ Here the attempt has been to retrieve a Semitic and a patristic understanding of memorial, to give priority in eucharistic theology to the *lex orandi* over the *lex credendi*, or to give priority to biblical and liturgical images over metaphysical and systematic explanations. Is the practice of hyphenating the word “re-presentation,” some would ask, really a satisfactory way of explaining the nature of memorial? Some agency through which this salvific death is operative throughout history is necessary lest the whole drama of human salvation be collapsed into one moment, forever repeated. The advantage of these various positions on eucharistic koinonia is that, by taking the Eucharist as a memorial, they attend more explicitly than did Casel’s explanation to God’s work within and throughout history subject to historical realities and situations.

Three sorts of contribution within recent Roman Catholic theology are here analyzed in order to help develop a eucharistic theology rooted in koinonia: a way of relating the Eucharist to the relation of the Son to the Father, a way of rooting the sacramental action in the action of the assembly as such, and an understanding of embodiment and corporate expression along the lines being developed by feminist writers. After explaining trends, I will incorporate them into a proposal for an understanding of eucharistic koinonia as rooted in gift and then indicate the potential ecumenical significance of such an understanding.

⁸ For a discussion of the relation between the koinonia of the Church and the koinonia of the Trinity, see Birmelé, “Status quaestionis” 274–80.

⁹ *Ibid.* 280–84.

¹⁰ A more recent version, offered in different terms, is that of Cesare Giraudo, who claims to find the idea of representation in the Jewish Passover meal. Giraudo prefers to write of making the people present to the mysteries than of making the mysteries present to the people (Cesare Giraudo, *Eucaristia per la Chiesa: Prospettive teologiche sull’eucaristia a partire della “lex orandi”* [Rome: Gregorian University; Brescia: Morcelliana, 1989] 162–244).

Christ's Kenosis and Eucharistia

In his writings on the Eucharist,¹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar often attended to the sacrifice made by Christ in his self-offering, with a parallel view of the Church's self-offering as the way of entering into the movement of Christ's prayer at the Last Supper, and thus into his eucharistic relation to the Father. This explanation, however, cannot be properly grasped without looking at its foundation in Balthasar's vision of the communion of persons within the Trinity and his contention that eucharistia is explicative of the Son's relation to the Father.

Writing about the Eucharist in the first volume of his series on theological esthetics, Balthasar stated that the accent in eucharistic theology needs to reside on the encounter between Christ and the Church in the "act of the meal" in which the unity between Christ's supper action and death is apparent. This meal, taken at the gathering of a community, is a constitutive event in the relation between Christ and the Church.¹² On this basis, he also located the Eucharist within the drama of the world's salvation.¹³

Balthasar traced this relation between Christ and the Church, in their shared relation to the Father, back to the eternal relation of the Son to the Father. This he explained through use of the Pauline metaphor of kenosis. Within their eternal relation, the Son wishes to be nothing but the icon of the Father, according to the trinitarian doctrine that nothing is distinctive of any person in the Trinity other than the relationship itself. The Son empties himself of anything that is peculiar to himself, of anything that is not reflective of the image of the Father. In his incarnate being, the Son continues to live and act in this iconic and kenotic relation to the Father. Through his death and descent into hell, Christ engages in a dramatic action whereby he enters the drama of the working out of humanity's relation to God within a world fallen into sin. The Church's eucharistic action, its memorial of Christ's Pasch, is its participation in the eternal movement of the Son towards the Father, its union with Christ in kenosis, and its way of entering with Christ into the drama of the world, in the expectation of its eschatological resolve. In order to give another image to this relation in the drama between Christ and the Church, Balthasar described Christ as the bridegroom who comes forth from the Father to embrace humanity with a divine love and to make the Church his bride in this union of love and service.

While drawing attention to the movement of the eucharistic prayer,

¹¹ Among the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar in English translation, see "The Mass, a Sacrifice of the Church," *Explorations in Theology 3: Creator Spirit* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993) 185-244; *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics 1: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989) 571-75; *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory 4: The Action* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994) 389-406; *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990) 95-100.

¹² Balthasar, *Seeing the Form* 571-75. ¹³ Balthasar, *The Action* 389-406.

expressive of Christ's and the Church's eucharistic kenosis, this theology nevertheless takes the communion at the eucharistic table as the central action of the celebration. The reality of the Church as Body of Christ is realized in sacramental communion. Christ and Church give thanks to the Father as one in the meal, in the Christ-Church event. In the meal, Christ and Church are fully united in nuptial union, a union of one flesh. The eucharistic prayer is related to the table as a proclamation of faith in Christ as Son and Savior, and as a means of communing with him in his own kenotic relation to the Father, so that the table communion is perfected. This communion allows the Church as Christ's Body to be the transparency of God's eternal agape in the world. By embracing this relation to the Father, the Church at the communion table is able to be united in true reciprocal communion with Christ in the sacramental gift of his body and blood. In two finely cut sentences, Balthasar summed up how sacrifice and meal belong together as one:

What is really important is that Christ, at the end of the ages, once for all, by his own blood, has passed both through the heavens to the Father (Hebrews 9, 12) and into those sharing the meal, as the sacrificial victim poured out as libation. . . . The Son thanks the Father (*eucharistein, eulogein*) for having allowed him to be so disposed of that there comes about, at one and the same time, the supreme revelation of the divine love (its glorification) and the salvation of humankind.¹⁴

While the Eucharist is prayer, sacrifice, and sacrament, it is also drama. As a memorial it commemorates the drama of Christ's Pasch, the engagement of the Savior with the evil of the world in faith and trust in the Father's love, even in the hour of dark abandonment. In keeping memorial, the Church cannot but in turn be confronted with sin. When the Church enters in the freedom of the Spirit into Christ's relation to the Father, by the same token it is drawn into the drama of the world's sin and salvation.¹⁵

Eucharist "in Persona Christi, in Persona Ecclesiae"

Since Balthasar wished to place the accent on the community event, he referred to the celebrant as "the delegate of Christ and of the community,"¹⁶ giving theological priority, however, to the priest's representation of Christ as bridegroom. To develop this imagery is to exploit the privileged expression of the mystery of Christ's presence in the Church in exhibiting the agape of God. Though it is broadly conceived as the sacrament and sacrifice of the whole Church, this theology lo-

¹⁴ Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale* 98-99.

¹⁵ In explaining the communion between Christ and Church in the Eucharist, Balthasar applied his well-known distinction between the masculine and the feminine, but the explanation as such does not seem to need this.

¹⁶ Balthasar, *Seeing the Form* 174.

cates the power of eucharistic action precisely in the action of the minister, understood as an action in and for the Church.

Various writers, especially among those who are attentive to liturgical traditions and texts, are more inclined to recast eucharistic theology by a reconsideration of the manner of formulating the action of the ordained minister which states that in offering the sacrifice he acts *in persona Christi*. Of these, Edward Kilmartin is a good example.¹⁷ To express a communion ecclesiology that serves as the foundation of eucharistic theology, Kilmartin used a Rahnerian theology of symbol, though he related it directly to the local church, whereas Rahner often related it to universal church structures. Kilmartin connected ecclesial communion to the Trinity through what he called a bestowal model, whereby he wanted to allow for the action of Christ and of the Spirit in the Church.¹⁸ According to this bestowal model, the Spirit, within the Trinity of persons, is bestowed upon the Son by the Father, so that the Spirit is the bond of union between them. Since the economy of redemption conforms to the eternal economy of trinitarian relations, this means taking account at one and the same time of the mission of both Son and Spirit in the world. These missions do not have a "before" or an "after"; the sending of one person implies the sending of the other, else it would not be expressive of trinitarian communion.

Thus the Church, as a community of faith bound together by the gift of the Spirit, is the symbol of Christ and participates in his relation to the Father. In presenting the Eucharist within this context, Kilmartin explained that the eucharistic sacrifice is indeed the sacrifice of the Church and of the people, not primarily that of the priest, who is but the minister to this sacrifice.¹⁹ He pointed to the representative character of the liturgical action as an action of the body made one in baptism and in faith, and showed how Christ acts in the sacraments precisely because in the power of the Spirit they are actions of the Church united in faith and love. This means that it is the appointment of the minister to act in the person of the Church that means that he acts in the person of Christ, when this means to act in virtue of the power of the Spirit which Christ left to the Church. Scholastic theology had indeed made the action in the person of Christ dependent on relation to the Church, but the Church involved was the hierarchical one. Kilmartin used *koinonia* to express the character of the Church in itself and its liturgical action. The exercise of Christ's power is not simply a service of that communion, but has its reality by being inserted into it and functions to give it expression in a communion of prayer and table. The role of the ordained minister is to bring the

¹⁷ For a recent posthumous work, see Edward J. Kilmartin, "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium," *TS* 55 (1994) 405-57.

¹⁸ Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1988) 112-34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Church together in prayer and table so that the action is that of the community itself, not an action of the priest with which it is joined.²⁰

Even while insisting on an ecclesial foundation to the Eucharist, Kilmartin put great emphasis on the eucharistic prayer and on an understanding of sacrifice as offering. He professed to find this in early eucharistic tradition and particularly in the thought of Irenaeus of Lyons.²¹ Though Kilmartin was sensitive to the unity of prayer and table, he found the prayer the proper way in which to approach the sacramental table, in gratitude and self-offering. He also gave considerable importance to the symbolism of the offering of the community's bread and wine. He explained this "offering with thanksgiving" as the sacrifice of the people as a baptized community. He placed the primary expression of the memorial of Christ's sacrifice in this eucharistic prayer of the people. Thus Christ's death continues to be seen as his self-offering to the Father for the sake of the world, and the Church takes part in this by the movement of its own self-offering. The prayer represents the movement of the people in the offering of themselves, as this is represented in the offering of their gifts. By the blessing pronounced over the gifts which must include the epiclesis, this offering is taken up into Christ's self-offering and is transformed in the power of the Spirit, which changes both the gifts and the people's offering into a communion with Christ. Kilmartin expressed the close connection between prayer and table by seeing the blessing or sacrificial action completed or perfected in the communion in the body and blood,²² but he did not wish to forego the emphasis on the offering of bread and wine.

In this theology, the view of Eucharist is more earth-bound and more historically conscious than the Caselian approach, but it is a view that entails some retention of metaphysical categories to explain the effective action of Christ's death in the present. The Church is not so much present to Christ's past action, as Christ is present to it in keeping alive the memory and the effect of his past action through the power of the Spirit and the causality mediated through the Church's action and ministry. Retaining the Thomistic theory of efficient causality, Kilmartin gave it a pneumatological turn. The relation to the mystery of the Trinity lies in the bestowal of the Spirit on the Church in the manner of its bestowal on Christ in the Incarnation which occurs in virtue of

²⁰ By thorough investigation of medieval theology, Dennis Ferrara has helped greatly to remove the necessity of gender connotations from the term *in persona Christi*, but his persistence in relating the expression to the *ipsa verba Christi*, in which he finds the act of consecration, fails to get beyond the medieval dilemma and ignores the contribution of liturgical and patristic studies that can help frame the issue of ministry differently; see Dennis Michael Ferrara, "In Persona Christi: Towards a Second Naïveté," *TS* 57 (1996) 65–88, at 88 n. 75.

²¹ *TS* 55 (1994) 445–48.

²² "the eating and drinking is a positive act of adhesion to the blessing and ritual offering of the elements" (*ibid.* 447).

the eternal relationship in mutual love between the Father and the Son. The connection between Christ and the Church can be explained as the ongoing effect of the original bestowal of the Spirit on the Son and in the Incarnation on Christ.

One can appreciate Kilmartin's desire to see the things of earth—which are also the things of the community—caught up in the sacrificial and transformative action of the Spirit. The final word on this, however, may be that of Irenaeus, whom Kilmartin quoted, but perhaps changing the accent of Irenaeus's discourse.²³ What Irenaeus stated was that it is only with thanksgiving that bread and wine can be offered, i.e., in an act that recognizes the original act of creation and the restoration of all creation and of all that earth gives us in the saving action of the Redeemer. It is the thanksgiving that constitutes the offering. This thought of the martyr of Lyons is in keeping with formulations noted also in other writers such as Justin Martyr that gave a metaphorical twist to the words "sacrifice" and "offering" by stating that the only religious act acceptable to God in the new dispensation is thanksgiving and communion with that over which thanks are rendered. The Church's self-dedication can be expressed only in words of thanks and praise in which God's works are remembered and acknowledged.

In the final analysis, one may question any attempt that seems to give the Church's own self-giving in the offering of gifts and in the action of making thanks some liturgical priority to the act of communion where the gift of the sacrament is received. What emerges vis-à-vis God's initiative in giving is the ambivalence of a theology that stays close to the category of sacrifice and wants to integrate the sacrifice of the Church understood as self-offering into the sacrifice of Christ as it is commemorated.

Only in virtue of the gift given by God does the Church offer itself. Whatever is said of the prayer has to respect this fact.²⁴ Rather than to single out one place in the rite where offering is made or anything particular is done, one needs to consider the entire liturgical action as one. Just as in viewing a painting, one can momentarily concentrate on one panel for the fruitful appreciation of the whole picture, but what is noted within the whole is what augments one's perception. For a prayer to affirm the offering of self or of gifts before its completion or before reception of communion does not necessarily mean that the offering is accomplished at that precise moment.²⁵ When the Spirit is invoked in the liturgical prayers of the East, that does not mean that

²³ See *Irenaeus of Lyons on Baptism and Eucharist*, selected texts, trans. with introduction and annotations by David N. Power (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1991).

²⁴ This appears to have been in Thomas Cranmer's mind when he placed self-offering after communion in the *Book of Common Prayer 1552*; see the text in I. Pahl, *Coena Domini 1*, *Spicilegium Friburgense* 29 (Fribourg: Fribourg University, 1983) 395–408.

²⁵ Examples of this are the Roman Canon and the Liturgy of Mark.

it is at that precise moment that the Spirit acts and transforms. So too, words of offering before communion do not mean that offering is effected precisely as they are being spoken. The words belong within sentences; sentences belong within the text of the prayer; a prayer belongs within the entire ritual action.

In Balthasar's work, the meaning and placement of the eucharistic prayer are not problematic since he read the rite backwards, as it were. For him, the Church makes thanks and thus makes self-offering in Christ by virtue of the communion with Christ in the meal. He stressed the sense of the prayer as table prayer and the unity between prayer and communion rather than the progression from one to the other. Whereas Kilmartin was stronger on the liturgical expression of community unity in what he wrote of the role of the ordained minister, Balthasar gave a preferable interpretation to the relation between table and prayer.

Feminist Theologies of Body and of Discourse

Feminist writers are in the process of making significant contributions to theologies of body and of discourse.²⁶ While the inclusion of women as ordained ministers in some churches, together with their exclusion in the Roman Catholic Church, is perceived quite dramatically as a stumbling block to eucharistic communion, the ecumenical dialogues have not benefitted much in their eucharistic accords and reports from feminist theologies. Nonetheless these are important for their fresh perspectives on eucharistic symbolism and language.²⁷

Taking feminist research and discourse as simply another theology among many would be a mistake. Even though there are differences among them, feminist writers share a common goal, namely to question the symbolic ordering and the symbolic language of the Christian and Catholic tradition of Eucharist from within so that the symbolic order itself can be renewed. While integrating what is found in tradition, they interpret it in light of a feminist hermeneutics, allowing for the inclusion of what in the past was often treated as marginal, especially women's experience, women's pieties, and women's ritualization.

Two sorts of discussion in feminist theologies promote change in the prevailing symbolic ordering of the Eucharist. The first, developed by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza²⁸ and Mary Collins,²⁹ deals with a litur-

²⁶ For an overview and bibliography, see Susan Ross, "God's Embodiment and Women," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993) 185–209.

²⁷ Feminist theologies have promoted wider exchange between churches; my attention here is given to the contributions of some Catholic theologians.

²⁸ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Table-Sharing and the Celebration of the Eucharist," in *Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist?*, ed. Mary Collins and David Power, *Concilium* 152 (New York: Seabury, 1982) 3–12.

²⁹ E.g., Mary Collins, "The Public Language of Ministry," *The Jurist* 41 (1981) 261–94.

gical discourse that separates the community into hierarchies and leaves women at the margins with little voice in rite and prayer except as recipients. While current magisterial teaching is emphatic about women's equality in the Church within the community of disciples, the ritual ordering has not given them a commensurate place.

Pursuing this insight, one can recognize that the language that speaks of Church as Christ's bride or as Christ's body in effect often tames the experience of body and of women's place in the Church. This puts women on the periphery related to the order through use of the imagery of sacrifice, when this term means forsaking something dear and close to one's being. Women's body and bodily experience are not integrated into the imagery of Christ's body offered nor into the imagery of the Church as his body, unless it be virginal and asexual. When "sacrifice" is taken to mean dying to what is good or giving up the experience of the self, then indeed women can be made part of sacrifice by renouncing the body, whether as partner in the one flesh or as mother cherishing the child of her womb. If, however, sacrifice is metaphorically allied with thanksgiving, with receiving gift as blessing, and with the communion meal, then women can give joyful voice to their experience and blessings. They may also give doleful but strong and emancipatory voice to their sufferings, including those imposed on them by a prevailing symbolic ordering of human community, however Christian or biblical the order's language in doing this.³⁰

The second type of feminist discussion I wish to highlight deals with imagery and expressive language pertaining to the body. This affects the ways of representing the presence and power of Christ and the Spirit in the liturgy, as well as the communion of the Church as Christ's Body.³¹ Studies of medieval women mystics show how women used the language of the body, rooted in their "writing of their bodies," to explain their mystical experience of union with Christ.³² Some, like Gertrude of Helfta, used it also to write of celebrating and receiving the Eucharist.³³ Such expressions remained on the margins and were not integrated into the eucharistic language of the symbolic order of celebration or into school theology. However, they belong to the eucharistic reality of the Church as a body, where male and female both have place. This reality needs to be retrieved.

³⁰ There is an interesting comment by the Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney on his mother's devotions to the suffering mother of Jesus and St. Anne: "These were actual real psychic resources for sublimation in the lives of women. . . . Nowadays I remember that affirmative bold outcry of prayers from women in church as a cry of rage and defiance. My mother wouldn't have put it that way—she would have seen it as a form of transport and endurance" ("Seamus Heaney: An Interview," *Irish America*, May/June 1996, 27).

³¹ Ross, "God's Embodiment and Women" 185–209.

³² Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University, 1994) 204–24.

³³ See, e.g., *The Herald of Divine Love* 3.18, in *Gertrude of Helfta: The Herald of Divine Love*, trans. and ed. Margaret Winkworth (New York: Paulist, 1993) 175–84.

What is it for Christ now to take body in this body of his disciples, where body includes female and male experience and is indeed located in women's body as in man's? While the language of mysticism was usually that of women devoted to Christ in virginity or in widowhood and thus expressed a body experience of the unmarried, the married also need language in which to bring their experience of the Eucharist to expression and to present it as the language of the whole Christ formed and united in the sacrament of the body and blood of the Savior.

Even if the bridegroom/bride imagery were to be taken more seriously in its affirmation of being two in one flesh, rather than transferred to the Church as an expression of an order of relations between its members, the language of Eucharist would change, becoming more expressive of this union in one body.³⁴ When isolated from its context, bridegroom language privileges the biblical metaphor of headship, setting to the margins the metaphor of Christ now taking form in the body of the Church as his own symbolically realized self. The ritual is in essence a bodily function of eating and drinking, and the symbolism of the Eucharist refers to an action of the Body of Christ. Attention to this offers ways of reconsidering the tradition of sacrifice, of restoring the focus of celebration to table, and of reshaping the question of ordained ministry, situating it within the ritual of sacramental communion.

GIFT AND TABLE IN COMMUNITIES OF MEMORY

In what I have noted so far, the centrality of communion table in eucharistic practice and theology is clear. Also clear is that use of sacrificial language and imagery is problematic. In their writings, Balthasar and Kilmartin used *koinonia* to provide a context for the use of sacrificial language and imagery. Perhaps it is now time to see how an imagery more directly related to communion can actually replace sacrifice as key concept in eucharistic theology and catechesis. The alternative I suggest in this part of my article attends to the origins and purpose of the Eucharist in the divinely offered gift and act of giving which is the foundation and heart of *koinonia* or communion in the divine mystery. By shifting the emphasis to gift rather than to sacrifice, it is possible to integrate the key insights developed by focusing on table communion, by looking to the Eucharist as the action of the assembled community, and by listening to the challenge of feminist thought to the ways of imaging and realizing the *koinonia* of the ecclesial body.

From start to finish the Eucharist in its action is gift proffered, given, received, and lifegiving. It is proffered in the proclamation of the Word, proclaimed again and received with thanksgiving in the prayer, and shared at the table as the nourishment of the community

³⁴ For a discussion of patriarchal applications of this image in Ephesians, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 266–70.

of the Church in Christ and the Spirit. The imagery of *koinonia* and gift looks back to God's gift of the Word made flesh, given in the power of the Spirit that is likewise poured forth, and makes the table the centerpoint of proclamation, communion prayer, mutual in-being, and mission. The gift is received within the community of the body and ritually identifies or shapes the community. Reformation theology of proclamation, grounded in the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, can be reclaimed through the relationship between the offer of a gift in word and its actual bestowal. Proclamation begins with the word of Scripture but is taken up within the memorial thanksgiving as a doxology unto the Lord, so that it is not confined to an exhortatory, doctrinal, or ethical exposition of Scripture.

Relation to the Mission of Word and Spirit

Seen this way, the Eucharist emerges as the manifestation of the mystery of the communion of the Trinity, shown forth in the work of salvation. Eucharistic celebration needs to be grounded in a Christology and a trinitarian theology of coming forth, of procession or proceeding from the One without origins, as the outflow of agape, of gift extended in the proclamation of the Word and the power of the Spirit to embrace the whole of creation. Both Word and Spirit relate back to the unoriginated origin within the life of the divinity, and those who live in them both come forth from God and express the constant outflow of this love, now shown in human actions. Word and Spirit are to one another as breath and word,³⁵ the Word incarnate manifesting God's agape in concrete human self-giving, historicized and particularized because universal, and the Spirit is the creative and renewing love with which this is breathed forth. The work of the Spirit in the Church makes it possible to speak a fresh human word, though one that after the Incarnation is now always spoken in memory of Christ. It allows Christ to be sacramentally embodied in communities of all places, cultures, and times, and to enter thus into manifold stories and histories.

The theology of the triune God is developed from Greek patristic perspective in terms of procession and mission, where procession of Word and of Spirit from the Father are complementary to one another; the Spirit is not described as proceeding from Father and Son, but either from the Father through the Son or as reposing on the Son. In writing about the Son as Word and Image, Basil of Caesarea described the Spirit as the Breath of the Father,³⁶ and the Word as Icon of the Father in the light of the Spirit,³⁷ or alternately praising the Word as

³⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 18.46; Greek text in *Traité du Saint Esprit*, ed. and trans. Benoît Pruche (Paris: Cerf, 1947); English translation, *St. Basil the Great on the Holy Spirit* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1980).

³⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38 and 18.46.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 18.47.

“the true Light by whom the Holy Spirit was revealed.”³⁸ In the economy of redemption and of sacrament, Word and Spirit work together, one revealing the reality of the other as they both manifest the Father in their respective operations. Using the language of word and love, they have to be taken together. There is no divine Word spoken except in Love and no love poured forth unless made manifest in an uttered word or a creative act that has visible form. When the Word of God took on human form, the Spirit was breathed forth into this humanity, for the Word could not be uttered without an effusion of Love. To use the language of historical embodiment and liberative energy, the Word appears as an event within human story and strictly part of it, while the Spirit that testifies to this embodiment releases the divine power to enter many stories and take new forms of embodiment, even as they relate to the one original enfleshment in Jesus of Nazareth, who in the time of Pontius Pilate was crucified, buried, and raised up.

To speak of Christ sending the Spirit at Pentecost is to state that the Spirit, at work in Christ and before Christ, now reposes on the Church, his Body, and that the Spirit dwells therein in a way which testifies to the power of this Word who is Jesus Christ. When the Word is remembered and spoken in the proclamation, prayer, and action of the Church, this is done in the power of the Spirit who testifies through the love that abides in the heart of the Church, and gives life and truth to this ecclesial and sacramental uttering and the participated koinonia of its human-centered reality. The missions of Word and Spirit continue in the Church which has been configured in its own existence and form to Christ, so that in it Christ is proclaimed as God’s icon and the gift of the Spirit continues to be made known through the Body of Christ. What is spoken or proclaimed is the gift of Christ for and to the world, abiding now in the Church, as it testifies in the world to God’s liberating grace through the action of the Spirit.

Celebration

The language of celebration, as appropriated by Christian communities, presents this gift to people within their own cultural and social realities. The eucharistic gift comes from the action of Christ at supper and on the cross, and testifies to the union with him through the Spirit in his relation to God and in his risen life, and to the eschatological promise embodied in the Resurrection. The bread and wine are themselves received as gifts of creation “with thanksgiving.” The point of being thankful for bread and wine, and of blessing bread and wine, is that it is *this* bread and wine, that which belongs to the life of a people

³⁸ Basil of Caesarea, *Eucharistic Prayer*, English translation in R. Jasper and G. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1989) 117. The Latin translation in A. Hänggi, *Prex Eucharistica*, *Spicilegium Friburgense* 12 (Fribourg: Fribourg University, 1968) 230–43, incorrectly gives *processit*, for the Greek *exephane*, “to make known.”

and stands, as first-fruits, for their life. Bread and wine are given by creation to a people who await redemption in the midst of a suffering that earth itself shares. They are blessed through a thanksgiving that proclaims the redeeming presence and gift of the Word and the Spirit who transforms this earthbound, earthly, earth-energized life in the hope of the time when God will be all in all.

The eucharistic prayer was first called a sacrifice because it is an act of thanksgiving, not because it is an offering made to God in any true ritual sense. It is rather a taking with thanksgiving of what God offers, the Christian Church's one replacement and so reversal of the religious ritual act of offering things to God. If these things are brought to the table, it is so that they and the lives they represent may be transformed in the saving power of Christ and his Spirit, making of the earth's bounty a gift of communion with God in Christ. The eucharistic prayer is a table prayer, prayed over bread and wine in a thanksgiving that embraces not only the grace of redemption but also the gift of creation and created things. Along with thanksgiving it is a prayer of intercession which, made in the memory of Christ and in the name of Christ, asks for God's mercy and continued gift of life, and that in very concrete applications so that none may be separated from the divine *koinonia*. In its inner movement, flowing out of the proclamation of the Pasch, and leading to the table, it gathers the community into this movement to the table, united in the Spirit, desirous of the mysteries, and united with Jesus Christ in his relationship to the Father, wherein all is gift and nothing exists except in virtue of being gift. The desire to live from gift and in turn as God's gift and the manifestation of God's gift is what gathers the Church into the communion of Christ's Body.³⁹ The words and the rite used in celebration are never commensurate to the event commemorated or to the gift conferred. The proclamation and the sacrament itself in their appearance in earthly form are fragmented, given in many human and earthly forms. Yet it is because Jesus Christ gives himself as God's giving, and with himself his Spirit, that the Church knows whereof Scripture speaks and the prayer sings. It is of the supper-cross event, the giving of Christ's body and blood, first upon the cross and then in anticipation at the supper, in sacrament.

Every interpretation of the Word proclaimed in the assembly, every enactment of table ritual, is done in the light of the eucharistic gift, memorial of the cross and sacramental offering of the same body and blood there crucified. At the supper, Christ gave eucharistia to the Father, in the communion of their love. Following the movement of the Spirit, he did so in a communion with his disciples whom he made one with himself through the gift of his body and blood, which will be

³⁹ For how insights into the functioning of language can serve this understanding, see David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 305–12.

handed over, shed. The giving of the gift invited the disciples to drink of the chalice, to take from the dish without betrayal, so that they might be one with him in their giving of themselves. At the supper, Jesus' relationship to the Father was expressed in a prayer of blessing, made in the Spirit, in an acknowledgment of the sending by the Father as a culmination of all the giving of creation and salvation. In his own action he continued to give that which flows out in the first place from God.

Embodiment

Attunement to the embodiment of the gift can promote taking note of three interests of feminist hermeneutics. First, the sacramental embodiment in the church community is a social ordering within which rituals take place and have the power to integrate the total experience of its participants without distinctions of status. In this sense, Christ's embodiment in the Church prophetically calls into question the adoption of any social ordering which retains status distinctions or marginalizes some of its members. Second, this sacramental embodiment through the actions of eating and drinking is an embodiment in and through human bodies, where the whole human experience of body-person is integrated and transformed. Ritual expression and ritual language need to give this adequate weight. Third, a feminist hermeneutic permits an alternate reading of sacrificial imagery, well related to the insistence of liturgical scholars such as Louis Bouyer that in relation to the sacrificial death of Jesus it is the meal which is at the heart of Christian sacrifice.⁴⁰ When the need to atone or propitiate for guilt is given primary importance, the need to offer sacrifice underlines the guilt of those who offer and so promotes alienation from one's sinful body from which one must free the spiritual self in order to receive forgiveness. When sacrifice itself is first and foremost a communion meal, this not only expresses reconciliation through communion with God, but it also affirms the body and integrates body experience into the sacramentality of being the Body of Christ.

The expression and ritual of table sharing needs to be full and complete, an expression of bodily and spiritual experience. If Christ takes body in the body of the Church, it is in the bodies of church members that he sacramentally manifests his oneness with the Church. The food and drink of his body and blood nourish and feed these bodies in the action of a table where all sit and eat and drink, taking his body and blood into their bodies. In this rite Christ takes on a bodily form in those who in this sharing are his members so that he is present to the world as Body through these bodies. Leaving out any bodies, in particular leaving women's bodies out of this sacramental being of Christ,

⁴⁰ See Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1968) 97-105.

is contrary to the gift which is left at the supper to the Church of all ages and all cultures.⁴¹

The naming of God and of the gift is rooted in this experience of receiving and in turn becoming/being gift through communion in the gift of gifts, as it also in turn serves to give it shape. Masculine and feminine images are used in addressing the unoriginate, as they are used in expressing the bodily reality of being sacrament through the sacrament. Sending forth from the Mother's womb may be as much an analogy for proceeding as coming forth from the Father's bosom. In naming the one who takes flesh, images of Wisdom jostle with those of Son of Man. While the Word walked among us in male form, his assumption unto himself of a full human experience in communion with others is remembered and his present sacramental embodiment in the Church enlarges the boundaries of the human manifestation of Word/Wisdom. Naming the Spirit has long included female imagery, but with the risk of seeming at times to make the Spirit alone express the feminine, thereby ironically relegating women to a disembodied presence in the sacrament. When named as the freeing energy and power that liberates from servitude and oppression, the action of the Spirit is intimately related to the embodiment of the Word/Wisdom in human community and absorbs many images in human story. The invocation of the Spirit enables the Church to affirm the culturally diverse forms taken in the giving of the sacramental body, as the Word reembodies in the human community to which the gift is given.

ECUMENICAL CONTRIBUTION OF THESE THEOLOGIES

Within the context of *koinonia* as opened up by ecumenical dialogues, the elaboration of a theology of communion by Roman Catholic theologians and an accent on gift can help the Catholic Church to integrate into a richer context what is intended in the formulation of the truth of presence, substantial change or transubstantiation, sacrifice, and ministry. What has been achieved in ecumenical agreements and conversations can be revisited to show how the difficulties over these matters are resolved differently within a perspective of ecclesial communion and divine gift.

When *koinonia* is the key to eucharistic theology, the focus of thought and rite can again become the eucharistic table and the act of communion. The 16th-century separation of sacrament and sacrifice is overcome. The unity of the eucharistic prayer and table emerges. The eucharistic prayer is defined as the blessing of the table, or of the bread and wine set forth on the table. The entire meaning of the eucharistic prayer lies in its relation to the table at which the body and blood of Christ are given and shared in faith and in the Spirit. Christ and

⁴¹ The necessary openness to cultural diversity within the history of peoples is not discussed here; see David N. Power, "Liturgy and Culture Revisited," *Worship* 69 (1995) 225-43.

Church are, through this communion in action and in prayer, one body in which the cross–supper event is represented as the action of Christ's self-giving through death and sacramental gift, in a love that proceeds from God and that bonds God and humanity.

The liturgical action fits this understanding, and this understanding is confirmed by the action. In the liturgy of the Word, what is offered is proclaimed, it is received in the Spirit with a thanksgiving that is a new doxological proclamation and a sacrifice of praise. Through the anamnesis and epiclesis, the table action is related to the mission of Word and Spirit and the Church affirms the communion offered through the communion table. In the rite of communion, the indwelling of Christ and the Spirit is sacramentally expressed through the gift of his body and blood, and the Church is founded anew in its reality as Christ's Body in the world.

Memorial Sacrament

The Eucharist is celebrated by a community that gathers at the communion table in the Holy Spirit in remembrance of the saving death and Resurrection of Christ, through the proclamation of the Word, the prayer of thanksgiving over bread and wine, and the ritual communion in the body and blood offered to the faithful. The entire celebration of the Eucharist encompasses the relation to the Pasch of Christ. There is no need to restrict the imagery of the Pasch to that of sacrifice, as there is no need to locate its effective representation in any particular place, such as the words of Christ or even the eucharistic prayer as a unit. Today it is possible to celebrate the memorial in much broader and more varied terms than those of the 16th century.

However varied the forms or language of remembrance, attending to the Eucharist as sacrament of koinonia holds to the truth that it is Christ who suffered and died for us who is the gift of God proclaimed, offered, and received by the community. In this action, the Church is one in communion with Father, Word, and Holy Spirit. It is through and in Christ's eucharistia, love, and self-emptying, active now in the eucharistic sacrament through the power of the Spirit, that the Church is freed from sin, sanctified, and united with God in koinonia.

While koinonia is participation in the mystery of the Trinity, its visible manifestation and structure takes form in the local church that gathers for Eucharist. Communion between churches needs to find expression, but within a plurality of culture, ritual structure, theologues, and even doctrine. The relation of ecclesial koinonia to the missions of Word and Spirit offers insight into this plurality, since the interaction of the two missions in diverse historical situations is at one and the same time the principle of unity and of diversity. At present there are no clear indications of how far this diversity in unity may extend. But when the focus is on the local community as eucharistic community, the matter can be more readily explored than it is if di-

versity is seen to emanate from and relate back to some doctrinal and juridical center that controls celebration.

Offering

The doctrinal differences over offering and sacrifice can be transcended by giving primacy to communion and by regarding prayer as a prayer of communion with Christ's self-giving to the world and in eucharist to the Father. Offering is in fact a subordinate verb in the traditional liturgical vocabulary of sacrifice. Kilmartin and Balthasar explained that it is expressive of a movement which unites the Church with Christ's love for the Father and for the world, so that the Church, like Christ, is ready to give its very being out of love. What is stressed is not making satisfaction or propitiation, but rather reconciliation and a union with Christ in the Spirit that leads to a part in their mission to the world. Within the prayer, the blessing is connected with the table, and the language of offering is clearly subordinate to thanksgiving and to making intercession. Even when referred to the food and drink, offering is subordinate to thanksgiving. Offering with thanksgiving underlies all references to offerings. With respect to the Church's offering of self, the verb is subordinate, for it is subordinate to being justified by grace and sanctified in the Spirit, and expresses simply the readiness to live the communion with Christ celebrated in the Eucharist as a witness to his saving power among peoples.

Trent's definition of the Eucharist as a sacrifice of propitiation had to do with the value of applying the merits of Christ's death to the living and the dead, especially for the dead. It pressed no particular explanation of this. To relate this to the power of prayer made in Christ fits the exigencies of Trent's teaching.⁴² Appreciation of the broadness of eucharistic koinonia meets the exigencies of its teaching and at the same time puts its concerns in a better context by pointing to the table as the key moment of communion among all who live and have lived in Christ, united in the eschatological hope of a communion beyond death.

Substantial Presence and Change

The doctrine of substantial change was intended to affirm the transformation by Christ's action of the bread and wine into his body and blood, for the sake of maintaining the truth of the gift offered in communion that is both nourishment of the faithful and bond of the unity of the Church. The reason for continuing to reflect on this doctrine is its importance for an appreciation of the gift that is given. The expressions were chosen to explain a presence that is not material but spiritual, yet is not simply in sign but ontic.

⁴² See David N. Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer: The Tridentine Dogma and its Reinterpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

The teaching that developed through the Berengarian controversy up to the Council of Trent affirmed a presence that involves more than giving a conventional sign value to bread, and yet is different from a physical presence and a physical change. At Trent, it was meant to counteract the notion of presence "in, with, and under" (since these words seemed to the conciliar theologians to express a material presence of Christ's body), or to counteract the notion of presence "in spirit and power" (since this seemed too abstract or purely causative, taking away from the fullness of the gift of himself offered by Christ to communicants).⁴³

Martin Luther, in stressing the reality of bread and wine in the sacrament, upheld the sacramentality of Christ's presence. On the one hand, if these physical things were changed into the physical being of Christ's body and blood, his presence is distorted. On the other, if the physical realities of bread and wine were to disappear, one could no longer talk of sacramental sign. On the nonphysical nature of sacramental conversion and presence, and on the permanence in the sacrament of all the qualities of bread and wine, there can be no dispute. What is at issue is how one understands the ontic.

While irenic concerns downplay the doctrine of substantial change by placing it in the context of sacramental communion, Roman Catholic theology may well take up the challenge to translate it into something of enduring importance that enhances eucharistic celebration. The Catholic principle enunciated at Trent is that the gift is to be understood in the light of the words of Jesus. Perhaps too much attention has been given to the words "this is my body" and not enough to "take and eat." The bread and wine are transformed in the act of giving, expressed in action and in word. It is intended *ad usum*, if not precisely restricted to *in usu*. When we now say that the change comes about through the power of the Spirit and the ministry of the Church, this is because the offer of the gift is renewed through this action. This is all the more apparent when attention is given to the thanksgiving character of the prayer. Through prayer in the Spirit, the Church gives thanks in the Spirit for what is offered to it by God and his Christ, within the communion of his earthly Body.

It is important that the issue of substantial change be carefully related to the sacramental action, in which Christ gives his body and blood for communion and in which the Church as his body is united in and through this communion.⁴⁴ The actions of eating and drinking signify both the communal bonding among the faithful, and the forging

⁴³ For an explanation of the theory of Thomas Aquinas, not to be confused with the official doctrine, see David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* 219–26.

⁴⁴ As Karl Rahner put it in one of his essays, we do not first affirm the presence of Christ and then take the sacramental gift, but it is in being offered and given this food that we recognize Christ's presence in his self-gift ("The Presence of Christ in the Sac-

of this bonding through communion with Christ in the Spirit. For all that, the accent has to be on Christ's gift to his disciples and on reception in faith, yet the nature of the medium has ecclesiological and salvific implications. While recent Roman Catholic theology has put this in a more personalistic context, the concern with ontic change cannot be left aside totally. How the realities taken into the sign-act are affected is a legitimate question.

The Tridentine theologians and bishops, misunderstanding Luther's teaching, deemed that a purely simultaneous presence of Christ's body and blood with the bread and wine would take away from the truth of the gift and indeed of the fullness of ecclesial communion in and with Christ.⁴⁵ The act of blessing or consecration, located in the prayer as a unit rather than solely in the words of Christ, is the action of Christ in the Spirit, and it transforms the medium. The blessing cannot leave the medium as it was, as though Christ were simultaneously offering bread and his body, or simply offering bread as a sign and means of spiritual gift and communion. The action of the Spirit in earthly realities changes them. Christ is hereby present in a visible, tangible, edible way for a corporeal and communal sharing with the members of his body. What is given is totally Christ, the sacramental reality of Christ's body and blood handed over and poured out. All other reality yields to this presence and gift. The sacramental embodiment of Christ in the Church also takes on more force when the embodiment in the species of bread and wine as sacramental medium is affirmed. Though the presence is not a physical one, the form of Christ's self-giving is imprinted on the bread and wine, so that it is as the gift of his body and blood that they have their place in the eucharistic rite, and remain such *ad usum*, even beyond the moment of ritual enactment.

One contemporary non-Thomistic appropriation of transubstantiation has roots in phenomenology.⁴⁶ On the one hand, it points to the awesome and mysterious character of gift that is given, that of the crucified and risen Christ, which cannot be totally enveloped in its sacramental representation. On the other hand, it affirms the present, temporal, here-and-now character of the giving of the gift, as it passes through the change of bread and wine into the being here of the gift given, or the gift as here and now present for its giving. Jean-Luc Marion's explanation criticizes Thomistic metaphysics for trying to

rament of the Lord's Supper," in *Theological Investigations*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 4.309.

⁴⁵ It has rightly been noted that the canons of Trent (DS 1652) do not correctly apply to Luther's teaching once this is properly understood. Joseph Ratzinger makes this point when he states that "transubstantiation does not signify an antithesis to consubstantiation, if the latter is simply intended to mean that the bread and wine continue to exist unaltered, as physical and chemical entities" (*The Condemnations of the Reformation Era* 99).

⁴⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991) 169-82.

explain too much and so tying God to the elements and underscores both the mystery and the transparency of the gift of Christ himself made manifest in the offering of the elements.⁴⁷

The analogy of substantial change, by whatever theory it is explained, has eschatological and ecological implications. To thank God over bread and wine in memory of Christ's redemption is to recognize the gift of the created world and the presence of God's grace therein. The transformation of the whole of creation through the work of Christ and the power of the Spirit is expressed in the symbolic and effective transformation of bread and wine. The eschatological hope is confirmed. The why of the Incarnation is expressed in the fullness of an earthly embodiment peculiar to the presence and gift of the crucified and now risen Christ.⁴⁸

Ministry

How one places doctrines in their historical context affects one's understanding of ministry. Tensions on this remain between churches and are also found within Roman Catholic theology and life. The Second Vatican Council was emphatic about the communal character of the eucharistic celebration and about the active part of all the faithful in the celebration and in the offering of the sacrifice, founding this in baptismal priesthood. The council likewise taught that the difference between the priesthood of the ordained and the priesthood of the baptized was not to be understood as one of degree, but in fact a difference in kind.⁴⁹

Translated into pragmatic terms this means simply that the part played by an ordained minister in Eucharist and sacrament is different from that of the baptized, which has an effect on their place within the Body of Christ. Practical as well as doctrinal issues lie behind this insistence. The celebration of sacraments requires an ordained minister, whatever exceptions to this may occur in respect to some situations.

How this is to be further explained, perhaps even with different terminology, is a debated point in Roman Catholic theology. Two positions seems to be at odds with one another. One takes the baptismal priesthood as the foundation of ecclesial sacramental celebration and situates the ordained priesthood within this. For the other, the start-

⁴⁷ This criticism if addressed to Thomas himself may not be justified; see Power, *Eucharistic Mystery* 219–26.

⁴⁸ A number of other churches that have entered into dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church continue to express concern over the practice of reservation and adoration. The challenge to the Roman Catholic Church is to ensure that any reverence addressed to the reserved Sacrament is obviously related to its truly sacramental nature, i.e. for use at table. This practical point cannot be considered here, despite its relevance to ecumenical understanding.

⁴⁹ Again repeated in Pope John Paul II's 1996 Holy Thursday Letter to Priests, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 15, no. 1436 (April 10, 1996) 2.

ing point is the exercise of the ordained priesthood, which is put at the service of the royal priesthood, invited to take part in what is effected by the ordained.

This latter position is favored by the Introduction to the Order of the Mass⁵⁰ in the Roman Sacramentary, and by John Paul II's letter *Dominicae cenae*,⁵¹ which distinguish between the priest's sacramental offering of the sacrifice of Christ and the people's spiritual offering of the same, in communion with the sacramental. In other words, these two texts assert that the sacramental action is brought about by the priest, but that the purpose of this is for all the baptized to join with Christ in making a spiritual offering, where his sacrifice is sacramentally represented.

To some this seems to sit uneasily with the understanding of the Eucharist as an ecclesial action, rooted in the reality of community, within which a common action and diverse, well-differentiated ministries bring about the one sacramental action. The particular character of ordained ministry can be expressed otherwise in a eucharistic theology that is rooted in the notion of *koinonia*. In this perspective, the action of the Church as a body, the action of the Spirit, the action of the ordained ministry, the enactment of the memorial of Christ's Pasch, and the truth of the presence of Christ converge in one coherent whole grounded in the nature of the Eucharist as ecclesial action. It is the Church gathered in the Spirit that is called to table and that at the table keeps memorial and communion. The Eucharist is never well considered separate from the fact that it is the action and commemoration of a church community gathered in a particular place, and that it is the center of the life and mission of this community.⁵²

The ordained ministry is best situated within the context of the local church, indeed within the context of the eucharistic celebration of the local church, as was the case with early ordination rites, beginning with the text found in the *Apostolic Tradition*, which now serves in the Roman Rite as prototype for the ordination of a bishop. The apostolic ministry, as ministry of word and sacrament, takes its shape from the eucharistic celebration in which Christ takes form in the Body of the Church, through the sacrament of his body and blood. The local church is built into the Body of Christ as a table communion, and it is at the table that it is renewed in the gift of the Spirit for its testimony to the apostolic faith. The ministry belongs to the external form that the Body of Christ adopts for the sake of testifying to the Cross of Christ and the work of the Spirit. Through the presidency of ordained ministry, each eucharistic church is linked across history with the Twelve, with the

⁵⁰ *Ordo Missae, Proemium* nos. 2–5.

⁵¹ Pope John Paul II, "Dominicae cenae," *Notitiae* 16 (1980) 138–42.

⁵² The Roman Missal acknowledges that every sacramental offering is an act of the whole Church, but justifies the celebration without a community in certain situations (*Ordo Missae*, cap. 1 no. 4).

early apostolic community, and with the testimony that they gave to Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Through this same presidency, as an order giving visible form to the Church and its Eucharist, it is related to a communion of particular churches and belongs with them in a universal communion. In short, it is to the visibility of churches as Christ's Body, grounded in the sacrament of his body and blood, that we can look to see the sense and purpose of the apostolic ministry.

Within this perspective, the ministries exercised by the ordained need to be related to their true source of power, namely, the Word of God that is still operative and the action of the Holy Spirit. They also have to be inserted into a more basic recognition of the charisms given to the baptized and their exercise in ministry to the Church. This too belongs to the sacramental bodiliness of the communion of local churches, testified to by the freedom of the Spirit who speaks through its diversity and flexibility.

The sacrament of order, as sacrament of apostolic succession, is at the service of the apostolic succession of the Church as a eucharistic community. The sacramental action of the bishop is related to the proclamation of the Word and the act of memorial communion, kept in the Spirit. There is no ministerial power outside the proclamation of the Word and the invocation of the Spirit, but likewise there is none outside the communion of individual churches in the apostolic faith and in the Spirit. This is what is intended by Roman Catholic emphasis on the apostolic succession of bishops and their communion in the one Catholic Church, and this fits well into an ecclesial and pneumatological eucharistic theology where the accent is on *koinonia* and on God's gift in Christ and Spirit.

The question of ministry therefore is not reduced to an issue of the power to celebrate. On the ground of *koinonia*, there can be a recognition of the ministries of Christ and Spirit in other churches that are exercised within their eucharistic commemoration and celebration. At the same time, though the matter is open to further discussion, there can be an understandable hesitation to give the kind of recognition to one another that would allow communion at the one table. Unwillingness to practice a sharing of tables stems from awareness of the visible deficiency of communion that results from the division of churches. This does not have to be spelled out as a refusal to acknowledge the truth of the Eucharist or the reality of the sacrament in other communions. It means that a fullness of visible communion is missing that appears necessary to having but one communion table. In other words, the issue of shared eucharistic communion is an ecclesial one, not merely a matter of an invitation extended to individual persons.

One obstacle to a persuasive presentation of this reasoning lies in the fact that the Roman Catholic Church may be hesitant to recognize its own lack of fullness because of this lack of visible communion with other Christian bodies. When theologians point to the lack of visible and credal communion as a reason for not sharing the Eucharist, this

does not always come across clearly because of the constant stress on those right structures of sacrament and authority which are deemed most fully kept in the Roman Catholic Church. However, with a theology of *koinonia* as foundation, it is possible to recognize both the communion in Christ and Spirit that exists between all baptized Christians, and the lack of ecclesial communion which blocks full eucharistic communion, taking from the fullness of all churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. Along with faith in the communion that does exist, this confession of inadequacy opens up the way to greater desire and effort to work towards the *oikoumene*. It puts the issue of the ministry and its full sacramentality in the context of how Christ is made visible, and queries how visibility in one communion across particular churches and cultures may be most fully and efficaciously expressed.

CONCLUSION

Western churches have learned from those of the East the importance of a liturgical theology of eucharistic communion. The developments in Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue over the last 20 years have shown remarkable success in relating Lutheran, Calvinist, and Roman Catholic doctrines of the Eucharist to *koinonia*. The aim of my article has been to show how a theology of eucharistic communion is developing among Roman Catholic writers whose work has been influenced to a greater or lesser degree by ecumenical interaction, and how this is served by a eucharistic theology of gift. Finally, I have given consideration to how a communion theology and a theology of gift would affect points of tension remaining between churches.