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EUCHARISTIC JUSTICE

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The article explores the relation between the celebration of the Eucharist and the church's mission to promote justice. The Eucharist's eschatological orientation has profound implications both for understanding the eucharistic tradition and for developing inculturated and contextually appropriate forms of eucharistic celebration. Some implications impinge directly on the church's mission to promote justice.

SOME YEARS AGO I DEDICATED a book of liturgical essays to Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban, South Africa, honoring his ability to connect the promotion of liturgy with a zeal for justice.[1] This connection is the topic of this article.

Despite the concern behind a few interventions,[2] on the whole, the recent Roman Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist was more preoccupied with questions of style and devotion than with providing communities with eucharistic celebration or with matters of justice, care of the earth, or even with any interest in the common ecumenical mission of all churches. However, it seems frequent enough nowadays to say that there is a relation between the Eucharist and the church's mission to promote justice, peace, and the care of the environment.

Pope John Paul II on several occasions explicitly treated this relation. In

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[1] David N. Power, *Worship: Culture and Theology* (Washington: Pastoral, 1990).

[2] See the interventions of Bishops John Dew of New Zealand, Arnold Orowae of Papua New Guinea, Miguel Moran Aquino of El Salvador, Brian M. Noble of England, Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji of Nigeria, and Leo Laba Ladjar of Indonesia ("The Synod: A Multinational Gathering," *Origins* 35 [2005] 316–23), and Bishop Kiernikowski of Poland ("The Synod and Its Speakers," *Origins* 35 [2005] 338–39).

his encyclical on the Eucharist, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), he elaborated on the eschatological character of eucharistic celebration and of the hope that it generates. He stressed that this eschatological communion and eschatological expectation underline the Christian's commitment to the world and the quests for reconciliation among peoples and for justice and peace within communities of peoples:

> A significant consequence of the eschatological tension inherent in the Eucharist is the fact that it spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us. Certainly the Christian vision leads to the expectation of 'new heavens' and 'a new earth' (*Rev* 21:1), but this increases, rather than lessens, *our sense of responsibility for the world today*. . . . Theirs is the task of contributing with the light of the Gospel to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God's plan. . . . We need but think of the urgent need to work for peace, to base relationships between peoples on solid premises of justice and solidarity, and to defend human life from conception to its natural end. . . . It is in this world that Christian hope must shine forth![3]

In his later encyclical, *Mane nobiscum* (2004), calling for a special year of the Eucharist (October 2004 to October 2005), John Paul wrote of how eucharistic communion generates of its nature a spirituality of communion, a communion that generates "reciprocal openness, affection, understanding and forgiveness."[4] In this letter the pope appealed to the Second Vatican Council for a way of seeing how the Eucharist brings a community in touch with the very goal of history. He quoted the words of the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World about the place of Christ in human history: he is "the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the centre of humankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspirations."[5] This meaning of Christ for our history on earth as human beings is to be the focal point of eucharistic celebration.

These are grand assertions, but they require a hermeneutic of liturgical symbols and action that probes the inherent significance and orientation of the liturgy itself, as well as its reception into a variety of contexts. Today, this enterprise affects the rooting of liturgy in non-Western cultures and experience and their integration into liturgy in a special way, but it has significance for the development of eucharistic celebration and practice in churches of older origin as well.

[3] John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* no. 20, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html (accessed August 10, 2006).

[4] John Paul II, *Mane nobiscum Domine* no. 15, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20041008_mane-nobiscum-domine_en.html (accessed August 10, 2006).

[5] Ibid. no. 6.

ESCHATOLOGICAL HERMENEUTIC

As the French philosopher Jean Greisch puts it, when a tradition is in crisis, when many of its elements are put in doubt, a hermeneutical retrieval and reconstruction becomes necessary.[6] Certainly this is true of eucharistic celebration today, which in some ways has become the place where differences of opinion and attitude emerge most clearly. If eucharistic celebration is connected with the church's mission and presence in society, the professed eschatological orientation toward responsibility and justice exacts an eschatological hermeneutic of eucharistic tradition and practice. The meaning of the word *hermeneutic* may be taken at its simplest. It means a listening to the tradition from any particular context, when attention is given to historical and cultural factors at work and to the variations of language and expression to which these factors give rise. In this way, not only the past but also possibilities for the future and for a variety of contexts come to light.

To say that the Eucharist is eschatological in orientation may simply mean that those who celebrate it are in communion with those who already enjoy the heavenly liturgy of the Lamb (of which the Book of Revelation depicts an imaginary construct) and that therefore they anticipate their own part in it.[7] However, with a retrieval of the full meaning of the eschatological in the Scriptures, its meaning has more to do with the forces present in the working out of history.[8] It is to these forces that symbolic expression is to be given in the Eucharist. The eschatological expectation of the reign of God is associated in Acts 2 with the abundant outflow of the Spirit upon all God's people and upon all peoples. This is the life-force of participation in the mystery of Christ and in the bringing of God's reign to the world. Eschatological discourse symbolizes a life-force within history that transforms human energies and brings them to a fuller realization of God's reign already here on earth, even as the plenitude promised in visions of the fullness of Christ is awaited. This life-force is the communion of the Trinity at work in the world, God ever present and active through the Word and the Spirit. An examination of eucharistic traditions may pose the question, what these traditions say of this life-force and, as Eastern theologies say, its deification of the whole of creation.

When Paul chides the Corinthians for their failure to conform in their social lives to what the Lord's Supper proclaims, he tells them that they risk

[6] Jean Greisch, *L'Age herméneutique de la raison* (Paris: Cerf, 1985) 27–35.

[7] This is the meaning given in Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum concilium,* the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy no. 8.

[8] For a foundational discussion of eschatology and history, see Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM, 1967) especially 84–138.

eating the Lord's Body and drinking his Blood to condemnation.[9] The Eucharist, because of its proclamation of the death of Christ and the expectation of his coming, places communities and human enterprises under judgment, or alerts them to what is now commonly called the apocalyptic sting of the gospel proclamation, the submission of all human reality in its corporate and historical totality to a judgment that puts it face to face with Christ.

While there can be no pretence to find a reference to the Lord's Supper in 1 Peter 2:4–10, the eschatological focus of the passage may be retrieved in eucharistic anamnesis.[10] The character of the people saved through the blood of Christ is to be that of a royal and living priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices to God. In the context of the letter, it is apparent that the spiritual sacrifice alludes to the people's own suffering and to their communion with Christ in the suffering he endured on their account and to which they now bear witness before the world. There is an anticipatory quality to what is remembered and what is offered, for the author invites the readers to look upon all that happens in the world in the light of the forthcoming judgment when all things will appear in their true light. Though the Lord is now absent, the people are now fortified by his Spirit and can look forward in hope. Their spiritual sacrifices are not meant to be merely interior attitudes but actions in which the presence of the Spirit can be discerned.

This eschatological eucharistic communion of Christ's followers compels attention to the life-forces of the Spirit that assume and transform human energies in the quest for harmony, reconciliation, and justice, as well as extends the invitation to submit all to judgment in the light of the gospel. Moreover, the eucharistic celebration must be contextual. This means being open to expression by any given ecclesial community in the context of its own cultural, social, and historical reality. While the Eucharist expresses and reveals the mystery of Christ's Pasch, what does it simultaneously reveal of the presence of Word and Spirit in this complex socio-cultural reality? How is eucharistic celebration in turn to be judged in the light of the symbolism of the acclamation, "as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26)?

No hermeneutic is possible without critical attention to how traditions fail to integrate some aspects of meaning and orientation. What Jürgen Habermas has said of democratic traditions can apply in its own way to

[9] For a commentary on this text, see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* New International Commentary on the New Testament 7 (Grand Rapids.: Eerdmans, 1987) 534–66.

[10] Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter,* ed. Eldon Jay Epp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 149–68, 304–19.

eucharistic traditions: "We learn historically chiefly from the way historical events challenge us, showing that traditions fail, and that we and the conviction that heretofore guided our actions have gone aground on the problems that must be solved."[11] While the adverb "chiefly" may say too much, a critique of past failures is needed for sound future orientations. Simply put, the Christian church's eschatological responsibility toward the world does not always emerge as it should in past or present practice, nor is it always respected in the course of the eucharistic celebration.

In short, how is this life-giving eschatological orientation to justice borne out in eucharistic celebration, and, indeed, what kind of liturgical renewal is required for this sense of eucharistic commitment to justice to stand forth? To address the matter, I will treat the following five points: (1) the full significance of the fact that the Lord gives himself to the church at the common table shared in bread and wine; (2) the word of covenant that calls to and is heard at this table, or what John XXIII called "the table of the word"; (3) the memories to be evoked in eucharistic gatherings; (4) the work of the eschatological Spirit within communities; and (5) in the light of all this, how congregations in fact celebrate and may blur the sacrament's eschatological thrust.

THE COMMON TABLE

The eschatological commitment to responsibility for the world in which we live, particularly in view of the new globalization of economics and politics, requires attention to the eucharistic signs to find their grounding in cultures and histories. Indeed, what eschatology means first and foremost is God's presence in history and the orientation of history to the freedom held out before us in the memorial of Christ and in the outflow of the energy of the Spirit into the world. In other words, to appreciate the sense in which eucharistic communion justifies, gives justice, and leads to a commitment to justice, we have to work from the signs and acts of eucharistic celebration.

We start with the central sign, that of the communion of the diverse members of the church in the elements of bread and wine, around a common table, sharing in the things of earth. Rather than placing the axis of celebration in the "words of consecration" when the priest alone is thought to act, recapturing the act of sharing at the table of the Lord when all commune as the central moment would itself be an act of eucharistic justice. For much doctrine and theology the nature of the Eucharist as sacrifice has been allied with the consecratory power of the priest. However, a

[11] Jürgen Habermas, *A Berlin Republic: Writings on Germany,* trans. Steven Rendall, intro. Peter Uwe Hohendahl (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1997) 44.

much more traditional theology, still known in the East and in Protestant communities, allies the core of the sacrament and sacrifice with the communion at table where all are one with Christ in his sacrifice, as members of his Body. Indeed, the very sense of sacrifice in that we are in communion with Christ demands the retrieval of the sign of the common meal of fellowship, as Pope John Paul II said in the letter *Mane nobiscum.*[12] The key of the sign of the meal to the meaning of sacrifice is quite succinctly stated by Hans Urs von Balthasar: "What is really important is that Christ, at the end of the ages, once and for all, by his own blood, has passed both through the heavens to the Father (Heb 9:12) and into those sharing the meal, as the sacrificial victim poured out as libation. . . . And so the meal becomes the Church's real sharing in Jesus' flesh and blood in their condition of victimhood (1 Cor 10:16 ff.)."[13]

Hence it is necessary to put the question, What is it for Christians to live from a common table and to place the sacramental "breaking of the bread" in this context? How can the church of the faithful generate this spirituality of divine justice in its celebration of the mysteries? Going back to the New Testament's record of the earliest Christian gatherings in Jerusalem, we note that the core action was what was called "the breaking of the bread." Exegetes argue about the precise meaning of this term, but, putting aside these discussions, we may note that the gathering for the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week featured a community life of sharing and caring, a sharing from which the *diakonia* of the poor was inseparable. In other words, the Lord's Supper was inseparable from its members' being one in all things and privileging the care of the needy. There is no true eucharistic table without this kind of common table, where there is no difference and distinction of wealth, gender, race, or status, a communion not merely signified but lived out in very truth, in a communion of love, mercy, and compassion.[14] Indeed, Paul's concern in his letter to the Corinthians was precisely that this condition for authentic Eucharist had been violated, thus rendering the remembrance of the Lord a cause of condemnation rather than justification.[15] It is worth noting a further indication of the role of the

[12] *Mane nobiscum* no. 15.

[13] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale = The Mystery of Easter,* trans. and intro. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000; orig. publ. 1990) 98–99.

[14] There seems to be a double meaning in Paul's use of the term "Lord's Supper." In one sense it refers to the meal shared in common to honor Jesus as Lord, in the course of which his memorial was kept. In another sense, it refers to the more specific blessings of loaf and cup to which the Supper command is related. If either sense is contradicted by behavior, the other is as well.

[15] See Jerome Murphy O'Connor, "Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians," in *Living Bread, Saving Cup: Readings on the Eucharist,* ed. Kevin Seasolz (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical, 1987) 1–27.

gathering in mutual service in keeping memorial: commentators on John's Gospel point out that it is not inconsequential that we have an account of foot washing allied with the command of love in lieu of an account of the Supper itself.[16]

This relation of ethical commitment between the gospel and the Eucharist also seems present in Saint Augustine's well-known definition of sacrifice: "A true sacrifice is every good work done that we might cling to God in holy fellowship.... This is the sacrifice of Christians."[17] Augustine rejected the pagan notion of sacrifice as a placation of higher spirits so that they might mediate for us with God, and therefore he rejected the notion of the Eucharist as a cultic sacrifice. He taught that, for Christians, every deed whereby in the communion of the church we adhere to God is a sacrifice and that no other is needed. In other words, access to God is had not through mediators of an order different from the human, but through every deed that belongs to our communion with God through the unique mediation of Christ's death. All such deeds are then brought together, as it were, in the Eucharist, where the church itself in its profusion of grace and its oneness with Christ is a pleasing sacrifice to the Father.

The practice of a certain biblical ethic of care, openness, and reconciliation is endemic to a communion in the Lord's Supper, and we cannot be indifferent to it. Ethical demands are built into the sacrament itself, and the sacrament depends for its truth on ethical commitment and engagement. These are brought to symbolic expression in the bringing of gifts, the taking of bread and wine, and the eating and drinking together at the one table in communion with the risen Lord and in memory of his passion, his passionate self-giving on the cross, and his descent into hell.

The Catholic magisterium has often enough said that the Eucharist is to be understood as a sacrifice in the "strict sense." The Council of Trent explained that it is a memorial and sacramental manifestation of the once and for all sacrifice of the cross, accentuating the role of the priest and giving less stress to communion.[18] While not neglecting the role of the priest, John Paul II explains that it is in the sign of the meal that the church is one with Christ in his sacrifice, which is his self-giving to the Father, his self-emptying in obedience, for the sake of the world. Thus, in explaining

[16] Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew O'Connell, (New York: Paulist, 1987) 32–45.

[17] "Proinde uerum sacrificium est omne opus, quo agitur, ut sancta societate inhaereamus Deo.... Hoc est sacrificium Christianorum: *multi unum Corpus in Christo*" (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 10.6, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 47, ed. Bernardus Dombart [Turnhout: Brepols, 1955] 278–79).

[18] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* 2 vols., ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington: Georgetown University, 1990) 2:732–36.

sacrifice, John Paul II employs the image of *kenosis* or self-emptying found in Philippians 2:6–11.[19]

To pursue the metaphor of *kenosis,* beloved of Pope John Paul II,[20] one may relate it to Christ's formlessness, his giving up of the form of God's messenger in favor of the form of a slave and a criminal, the lowliest of human society. This form—or perhaps absence of form—is inherent to the obedience of his sacrificial death. It is at the common table, where there is no distinction or discrimination among participants, where there is a readiness to give up the treasured form dear to individuals and identifiable groups, that we discover what it means to describe the Eucharist as sacrifice.

Naturally, the way in which early Christians committed themselves eucharistically and eschatologically, or felt eucharistically called, was particular to the conditions of the times and of their life. They were a small, rather marginal community concerned primarily with their own just fellowship, but were compelled in faith to overcome divisions, to welcome strangers, and to live among themselves differently from other confederations because of their belief in the resurrection of the crucified one. Their direct contribution to a greater justice in the larger political, social, and economic order was insignificant and indeed seems to have been something they did not think too much about, if we consider, for example, Paul's advice to married couples, slaves, and slave-owners in the Letter to the Ephesians (5:22–6:9). Provided relations within the community were good—were indeed different by reason of being those of the body of Christ—the Christians had little they could contribute to changing a world order. In this sense one might be tempted to observe that, in the need to stand apart from others, early eucharistic communities were not very alert to the social implications and possibilities of their action.

The concern with what is often highlighted as spiritual communion or as a theology of ecclesial communion can, however, obscure the relation to social questions affecting the body public. This may happen even when questions of culture are taken into account. On this score, in reading a recent survey by an African writer of African ecclesiologies of communion,

[19] "By virtue of its close relationship to the sacrifice of Golgotha, the Eucharist is *a sacrifice in the strict sense*. . . . The gift of his love and obedience to the point of giving his life (cf. *Jn* 10:17–18) is . . . *first and foremost a gift to the Father:* a sacrifice that the Father accepted, giving, in return for this total self-giving by his Son, who 'became obedient unto death' (*Phil* 2:8) his own paternal gift, that is to say the grant of new immortal life in the resurrection" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* no. 13).

[20] See the text quoted in n. 19 above, as well as John Paul II's encyclical, *Fides et ratio* no. 93, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html (accessed August 10, 2006).

one might note the comment that some are quite deficient in their attention to social context and social consequence.[21] It seems, rather oddly, that concern with culture and cultural perspectives can pass over the fact that culture is interwoven with social realities and with the ethical bond of humanity to creation and cannot be considered in isolation from them, just as the life of the spirit also always means embodiment in a given set of historical realities.

This neglect, however, ought not to be accepted. As in the early days, Christians today celebrate in sign and symbol their relation to Christ as Lord, remembering his death and looking to his coming with the judgment that makes all things clear, that manifests the new heavens and the new earth. It is as an evangelical community, one that lives by Christ's promises and by his teaching that its members keep memorial. Today, however, given a situation very different from that of the first century, church communities are impelled by the sign, the symbolic exchange of the bread and the wine, to think of a greater justice and of the church's part in working with others to bring it about. This is a justice that needs to be related to our contemporary global political, economic, and cultural environment.

Churches are increasingly aware of the roots of eucharistic memorial in Jewish tradition, the tradition Jesus himself lived. Recalling what it meant to the people of Israel to keep memorial challenges their own understanding and practice of what it means to remember Jesus as the one given by God for our salvation. In their blessings the people praised God for the land he gave them and for its bounty, but in perilous times when the land was taken from them, or when it turned barren, they were still to see themselves bonded to it. Christians can too readily take the bread and the wine as signs of spiritual plenty in Christ. But if they open their eyes they are compelled to ask what the material realities of bread and wine reveal to them, those realities that Christ assumed in giving and revealing himself in the breaking of the bread. To grasp the significance of the exchange in bread and wine, one may need to draw attention not simply to the plenty of a table but to what the bread and the wine offer by way of glimpsing human vulnerability and brokenness; for here precisely is where the Word and Spirit enter our lives, affecting in a particular way the vulnerability of human life today in the face of multiple global forces.

While Jesus, according to the Synoptic Gospels, shared a full paschal meal with his disciples, the kind of meal into which some Jewish communities today have inserted the remembrance of the Holocaust, it was only to the loaf of bread and to the final cup of wine passed around that the early church came to attach the symbolic memorial of his sacrificial self-

[21] A. E. Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees, and Poverty* (Nairobi: Pauline, 2005) 74–85.

gift. These two moments, things and actions of the common loaf and of the cup shared, were indeed blessings.

These moments of exchange appear to have been already singled out as special moments in the fuller Jewish covenant meals of the Pasch and of the Sabbath. These two moments seem to have been, in their weighty simplicity, the precise times when those at table were most acutely conscious of God's covenant and of his covenantal promise, as well as of their own need. These were the moments that brought God's promises to mind when the people were drawn into what is most basic and elemental in being together, in sharing the goods of creation, the land that God had given them, and the promises they needed to sustain them in times of trial. There was something in the joy and the bitterness of the bread and in the heady taste of the grape that reminded the table fellows at one and the same time of what was given them and of the precarious hold they had on it. Carved into hereditary memory was the acclaimed and then wearisome manna in the desert, and the bunch of grapes brought by the scouts from the land of Canaan that provoked both wondrous happiness and awesome dread. The bread of joy is also the bread of affliction: it evokes many aspects of human life, the most basic needs of body and spirit, the need to share with others, the toil and the joy, the hunger for justice, the vulnerability of life on earth. So too it is for the church, God's people in Christ.

The production of bread placed on a table is linked to human, economic, and historically determined forces.[22] Its transformation into the Body of Christ is done only within the gathering of the Body that is the church in any given place and hence is concretely related to these forces. Unhappily, many times forces of oppression and economic conflict are linked with the production of bread, a fact that cannot be obscured when people put bread on the table for the common meal and the common Eucharist. Indeed, the bread that the Spirit of Christ transforms for the community keeping memorial of Christ's *kenosis* signifies and calls to mind—puts on the table, as it were—the human and social reality of the Body that is the people in the realities of daily existence. It may then be asked, in the face of injustice, what liberating and creative forces are brought to play when the name of Christ is invoked over the bread and when God's action of sending his Son and Spirit is recalled with thanksgiving—a cry from the heart and the expression of eschatological hope.

The bringing of the bread and wine to the table is a key moment in the

[22] Enrique Dussel, "The Bread of the Eucharistic Celebration as a Sign of Justice," in *Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist?,* ed. Mary Collins and David N. Power, Concilium 152 (New York: Seabury, 1982). See also Ma. Marilou Ibita, "Dining with Jesus in the Third Gospel: Celebrating the Eucharist in the Third World," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 42 (2005) 249–61; Catherine Vincie, "The Cry for Justice and Eucharist," *Worship* 68 (1994) 194–210.

eschatological significance of the eucharistic gathering, but unfortunately this presentation is too often obscured. In early Christian gatherings around the common table, it may well have been evident enough because the community's common sharing and its celebration of the Lord's Supper converged. Bringing the elements for the nourishment of their lives, worshippers selected the loaf and the wine from among the many things they wanted to share among themselves, but always with a special place given to caring for the poor. In the model of a gathering of households derived from cultural and social surroundings, this had a significance of symbolic exchange from which the sharing at the eucharistic table was inseparable.

The bringing of gifts to the assembly—for the sake of the poor, for the use of the community, and for the sacramental table—is an important ritual and symbolic part of Christian gathering. The three sorts of gifts belong together and are intimately connected. Often enough in celebrations, liturgical adaptations around the world allow peoples to use modes of expression indigenous to their own cultures. Thus African congregations bring the bread and wine, and perhaps other gifts, to the table with dance and to the sound of drums. Filipinos process with lights as they bring in the gifts. However, such practices may be little more than folkloric. There has to be enough freedom of act and expression to allow the bringing of gifts to reflect the modes of symbolic exchange indigenous to cultures, as this is the matrix to which the eucharistic gifts relate in celebration of the wondrous exchange of the mystery of the Word of God taking flesh.

Anthropologists and sociologists often remark that building society, community, and economy on a process of symbolic exchange is quite different from giving human encounter and interaction a primarily commercial foundation.[23] In symbolic exchange, relations between people and the differentiation of social roles come to light. So too does the manner of inhabiting the earth and relating to cosmic and ecological realities. This exchange is not new to liturgy, even if attention to inculturation requires that it be given more careful articulation. Cultural history tells us that the relations of peoples to the church in early Ireland and in Carolingian Gaul were founded in a form of gift exchange, each side receiving recognition and protection from the other so that the relation was seen as beneficial to all.[24] Today, when liturgical forms take shape among non-Western peoples, there has to be room for their modes of expression, so that the forms and purposes of gift exchange come to light within the context of the Lord's

[23] For example, see the contrast between treating things as "semiotic commodities" and employing them in "symbolic exchange," in Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, intro. Mike Gane (London: Sage, 1993).

[24] See Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 217–355.

Supper. Food and drink are exchanged in ritual meals not as commodities of economic value, but as symbols of an exchange between persons that signifies community relations, roles, and connection to the ecosystem. Giving expression to this personal relationality in the wondrous exchange of the Eucharist (*admirabile commercium*) is but an implementation of the rule that cultures bring riches to the gospel, and that the gospel takes root in cultures, enriching and transforming relations according to the memorial of Christ's self-gift and the word of the gospel, teaching an evangelical ethic.[25] In a globalized economy and politics, this respect for the heritage of gift exchange opens up vistas of alternate forms of relating to the world and of interrelation between peoples.

It is important that a community of Christian people receive food from a common and blessed loaf made from the soil of their land and from the toil of its inhabitants, and from a cup radiant indeed with sun but pressed out by tired feet. Chewing of the morsel and sipping of the wine goes to the very roots of the life that God has blessed through Word and Spirit and that Christ has taken as his own in a people's midst. To know the bounty of God and the promise held forth, a people must know of the precarious condition of its life, as well as the possibilities of life-giving exchange. As Augustine put it when speaking of the loaf in an Easter sermon to the neophytes, the people of the covenant are themselves planted on the earth, sifted like grain by the penance of deep conversion, moistened in the water of life and death in Baptism, baked by the fire of the Spirit, and so are themselves laid out on the altar, open in hope and prayer to being transformed into Christ's Body and offered with him. [26] The imagery cannot be divorced from the travail of living from the earth and seeking justice within the workings of a common labor, whose fruits are often denied those who provide the "work of human hands."[27]

The bread and the cup, while being signs of Christ's gift and presence, from an eschatological perspective are also signs of his absence, an absence to be endured until the justice promised in him is complete.[28] When blessed in remembrance of Christ, the bread and wine signify the body in which he

[25] Use of the word *commercium* to refer to the mystery of the Incarnation and to worship is quite common in the old Latin Sacramentary. See *Sacramentarium Veronense,* pref. Cunibert Mohlbert, ed. Petrus Siffrin and Leo Eizenhöfer (Rome: Herder, 1956) nos. 69, 90, 1249, 1260.

[26] Augustine, Sermon 227, in *The Works of Saint Augustine,* part 3, vol. 6, trans. Edmund Hill (New Rochelle, N.Y.: New City, 1993) 254.

[27] From the prayer for the presentation of the gifts in the Roman Missal, http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/Mass.htm (accessed September 7, 2006).

[28] Louis Panier, "Bread and Cup: Word Given for a Time of Absence," in *Hunger, Bread, and Eucharist,* ed. Christophe Boureux, Janet Martin Soskice, and Luis Carlos Susin, *Concilium* 2005/2 (New York: Paulist) 54–63; Anne Fortin, "From the Depths of Hunger," ibid. 46–53.

suffered and was raised, and is now absent. They signify the body and bodies of the people gathered, bodies that endure the communion and the hardships, even the privations, of which the bread and cup are a sign. They signify the expectation of the body to come, the bodily fullness in which the communion with Christ in his Body and as his Body will be perfected, and so all is now done with a view to that day of eschatological fullness.

It is this complex signification of bread and wine that raises the serious question of the choice of eucharistic elements in different climes and among different peoples. The arguments for retention of wheat bread and grape wine are based on ideas of institution and tradition.[29] The concepts themselves are misleading. Even when tracing the reality and history of the church, God's people and Christ's Body, back to the claim to know the historical Jesus, it has become unhelpful to use the notion of institution as though Jesus, Son of God, had given some kind of charter to his disciples.[30] For the liberation of sacramental life, there is still the need to get beyond the ecclesiology of society, hierarchy, and institutional foundations. Even the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels as his memorial command may well be an insertion of early Christian communities rather than words spoken by Jesus himself.[31]

Remembering him within the history of God and the history of covenant, communities used the procedures of the Jewish keeping of memorial. Jewish accounts of the Passover or of the command to keep the Sabbath are concerned with the remembrance of God's action in liberating them from slavery and of the work of creation. Inserting a command to keep memorial given in God's name, as though a command uttered by God, gives a secure historical and social foundation to these rituals. This is how Christians too proceeded, relating the ritual developed among them to the historical moment of God's intervention in the death and resurrection of his Son, who took flesh and in the fullness of time became part of Israelite history, and not only of *that* history, but of the history of all the peoples invited into the covenant through him. If the meaning of the memorial command is taken in this way, then we have the right meaning of tradition: the command is an invitation to a creative remembering, open to the future and to the new, not simply a ritual ordinance to be obeyed.

Requiring the use of unleavened bread, as does the Western church,

[29] In many African and Asian countries, wheat bread and grape wine are imports. They are hardly the "daily bread" of Christian communities and seem rather to signify what is alien in the implantation of the gospel among them.

[30] Karl Rahner in his own complex way did much to unravel the concept of divine institution. See, e.g., his, "Reflection on the Concept of '*Ius Divinum*' in Catholic Thought," *Later Writings,* Theological Investigations 5 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 219–43.

[31] Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread,* 102–16.

certainly has no secure foundation in either institution or tradition. It is not even a rule of early Christian practice but one that was imposed only during the Carolingian age when Christian sacraments and order were paralleled to the Israelite priesthood and sacrificial ritual.[32] Of course, it could be said that, if Jesus celebrated the Paschal Seder according to Jewish custom, he used unleavened bread. For some reason, however, early Christians saw—and today Eastern Christians see—no need, because of the Seder practice, to demand the use of unleavened bread. This may be because they understood the unleavened bread to be the memorial of freedom, of being released from slavery and offered the hope inherent to starting out on a new journey. This significance is, however, well retained even with leavened bread, and perhaps even better, since this was the daily fare of the common table of those who made *diakonia* a part of their gathering practices.[33] It would seem that the same possibility of a creative remembrance, a remembrance of a freeing and creative divine force sensed in the working of the Spirit, justifies a change to other forms of food and drink among peoples who sustain themselves differently from Mediterranean-based cultures. Indeed, such an accommodation would be more faithful to the memorial of the sacrifice and *kenosis* of Christ and would be truer to the eschatological thrust of Christian table and remembrance.

WORD OF COVENANT REMEMBRANCE

As noted above, since John XXIII, there is often mention of the two tables, the table of the Lord's Body and Blood and the table of the Word. The liturgical theology allied with Vatican II talks eloquently of assembly and so of participation. Talking the language of covenant, taken from Israelite tradition, helps to unearth the sense and the motivation of such assembly. Christian people come together because they are convoked by God's covenant, and by this covenant they commit themselves to the common table where the Lord is remembered and people belong together without discrimination and in mutual upbuilding. Since the convocation to assembly is to a common table as well, to hear the word properly there have to be ways of making it evident from the moment of gathering that word and table belong together and that the table is the privileged site for hearing the word. When people themselves brought the material for the table, not only for the eucharistic table but for the common table, it was quite clear why they were coming together: to have this food and drink

[32] Joseph Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite,* 2 vols. (New York: Benziger, 1955) 2:33–34.

[33] See René Jaouen, *L'Eucharistie de mil: Langages d'un peuple, expressions de la foi* (Paris: Karthala, 1995).

blessed and to share in it together. Now that this is no longer done, or is done in a very reduced and ritualistic way, one might wonder whether the loaf and the cup ought not to be on display on the table to those who enter in song and perhaps in dance to the sound of organ, harmonium, piano, or drum. The bread and wine laid out on the table constitute an invitation to those who want to make a loud noise together, and to those who are weary and burdened.

Christians, in their faith in the Risen One, are called to assembly and to table by God's Word and moved by the divine Spirit, in virtue of the covenant that God makes and remakes with his beloved. Exodus 19 and Nehemiah 9 are good texts of covenant-gathering on which to draw to give the people of the covenant renewed in Christ a sense of its renewal in him and in his sacrifice. Exodus is the original story of the striking of covenant between God and the chosen people, the making of a no-people into God's people. Nehemiah is the narrative of the renewal of the covenant after a time of travail. It allows voice to a cry that God not forget his people, a plea for a new beginning achieved in memory of the Exodus and of Sinai. From the Christian Testament itself, the words of 1 Peter 2:4–10 are pertinent: they convoke the people won by the precious blood of Christ to know their dignity as a priestly and royal people who find their life, their meaning, and their hope in him, and who know their sufferings lifted by the sufferings of Christ.

Were the table to be on display, in its invitation to eat and drink, it would be made obvious that it is in the breaking of the bread that the Lord is to be remembered, that this is where his coming again is to be expected. But these signs are not simply things to be transformed by prescribed words. In them, people see and feel their vulnerability, and they hear themselves addressed. Jesus showed the two disciples on the way to Emmaus that his Pasch was to be known through eyes that know the meaning of Law and Prophets, the covenant given in the Law and constantly renewed through prophetic recall of God's fidelity and of the people's royal priesthood. This Law is written on hearts of flesh from the very beginning; the consistency of the two great commandments of love of God and love of neighbor exacts the self-giving of the Son through passion and death but also contains the promise of new life. To the people of Israel, its implications were only gradually seen and appropriated, and it has fared no better among Christians. Yet it is as a people called to table and to table remembrance that the church is to hear and to be pierced by the word of the Lord addressed to all disciples.

As insinuated above, the assembly of Christians may be likened to that convened by Nehemiah, as recounted in Nehemiah 9, when, emerging from a period of distress, God and people reengaged themselves in covenant fidelity. They are never to forget their earthly heritage, never to forget that

God has called them to be his own people, never to forget what has been done for them, never either to forget the sins by which they singly and collectively betrayed the covenant, never to forget their distress or that of their forebears, however it has come about, and never to forget the hope in which they still live and are ever renewed.

There was no moment in the story of the people of Israel when they were not to be mindful of their past, of what they had been and of what they could become by God's gracious acts. They had been slaves and nomads; they had been scattered and even divided peoples; and they had been delivered: a no-people made into God's people. Only the contrast could reveal the truth; only the resurgence of memories could provide the fertile soil for fresh hope; only a remembrance of past could bring it into the hopeful present and show what yet might be. Such memory too would make them compassionate, mindful of others as God himself was mindful. Every injunction to keep Sabbath, to observe the Pasch, and to mark the feast of tents was accompanied by the ethic of remembering those who are now alien, now refugees, now slaves, now hungry. The commandments of the Lord too are replete with the reminders not to go twice over the harvested field, not to take the last olive from the tree, to remember always that there were those who would follow the harvesters, seeking nourishment, wanting justice. Without knowing how God had taken them from being no-people to being his people, without knowing what this transition meant, they would be ever unwilling and unable to live by the Law, to know themselves in the mirror of God's covenant, and to know who in truth was their neighbor.

MEMORIES

If the memory of their travail and of their liberation encased in the word proclaimed was so important to Jews and to Jesus, what memories for peoples today are called forth at the eucharistic table? In our time, when whole peoples are deprived not simply of food, drink, and habitation, but of their very cultural heritage, both the sign of the bread and cup and the renewal and remembrance through word of the covenant that comes from God make the Eucharist the place for recalling and healing the memories of those in whose realities the Word takes flesh, with whose often tragic history he makes himself one in eager longing. At the roots of all discussion of inculturation lies the memory of peoples, however joyful and however bitter.[34]

The eucharistic covenant evokes the question, how is a people's impov-

[34] David N. Power, "Foundations for Pluralism in Sacramental Expression: Keeping Memory," *Worship* 75 (2001) 194–209.

erishment—cultural privation, hunger, and landlessness—to be atoned for in Christ? Memories have to be evoked and purified, those of the suffering and of the perpetrators of suffering. On the advent of the Jubilee Year of 2000, John Paul II advocated a massive purification of memories for church communities.[35] These were in the first place memories of past deeds out of harmony with the gospel, sinful and hurtful to others. Some of these memories had to be of hurt done, of injury inflicted and suffered at the very hands of the church itself in its members and in its institutions. The church had to become a harbor, a haven for all who, facing truth, recall injuries done and injuries received, and who still suffer the burden of affliction, past and present. Only out of pain acknowledged may life be born anew; only by cauterization may wounds be cleansed and healed, then sweetened by the balm of salving oil. The experiment of truth and reconciliation is that of those who dare to gather at the eucharistic table. All such effort flows from and feeds what is recalled and mourned and celebrated around the twofold table of word and sacrament.

For the Christian church, inculturation, as a matter of justice and salvation, is a matter of self-knowledge in the knowledge of Christ and of God his Father. Without the redemption, the buying-back of cultural heritage, the more pressing realities of finding a place on earth, of finding a place in the global community, and of winning back lands and seas and rivers polluted by invasions of different sorts cannot be addressed by a people and for a people. How in Christ's name and memory are we to be part of this?

Among the apologies sought during Jubilee Year 2000, in search of a joyous purification of memories, we find some pointers. When the gospel was brought by European missionaries to Africa, the Americas, and Asia, not only did many disregard peoples' religious and cultural traditions and their histories, but they frequently denounced them and required a repudiation of what was native if faith in Christ were to be professed. If this apology made and invited from others by John Paul II is to ring true, the memories and cultural perspectives of these peoples need to be more fully present in ecclesial gatherings. Their histories need to be told, reaching into ancient times. What is remembered by them in their very bodies has to be respected: their healing traditions, sacramental signs, and remembrance of ancestors, in which are discernible the signs of the Spirit—acts and things akin to the "spiritual sacrifices," of which the author of 1 Peter wrote.[36] In these customs are represented a people's resources, that life out of which they may now live in Christ.

[35] John Paul II, Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee, *Origins* 28 (1994) 401–16.

[36] See Buti Tlhagale, "The Gospel Seed on African Soil," *Worldwide: The Church in Southern Africa Open to the World* 16.2 (2006) 13–18.

Apologies were made to women, on the Catholic Church's own behalf and on behalf of the patriarchies with which, in its own male dominance, it had often allied itself, apologies signaling the need for a retrieval of life-giving forces, certainly not as yet completed. Here there are ample memories to be healed and much reconciliation to be effected. If this purification is to ring true, we have to be touched at the very heart of eucharistic celebration, wounded in the flesh of Christ, wounded in the symbolic exchange of our ecclesial claims. The marginalization and inferiorization of women through the encoded symbol system of the memorial of the Lord cannot any longer go unnoticed. As philosopher Julia Kristeva has noted for both Judaism and Christianity,[37] if woman has not received justice, it is because her life, experience, way of thinking and feeling—what Kristeva dubs her *chora*—her vibrant expression of woman's experience and action have not been given a central place in the world of symbolic exchange. What is said as truth is done; what is not said is not done; what is given voice is heard; what is refused voice is not heard.

These are some examples of the memories to be evoked, inherent to our very practice of Eucharist. When the church celebrates this communion in Christ, it ought to be mindful of all that people have suffered and all the witness they have given to a life-giving Spirit. Today, at the Lord's table, we need to be particularly mindful of those who have perished through violence, through the senseless death of hunger and illness, or through deprivation of their cultural heritage that is not only a matter of song, dance, and expression, but also of the space and time in which they provide for existence, heritage, and future. To hope even for those dead in the knowledge of the love of God shown in Christ is one of the qualities of eschatological hope, a hope that leads also to action for justice.

When these memories are allowed expression, it is possible to ask how Christ as God's Word and how the Spirit as divine life free and energize a cultural and historical heritage. There are indeed forces in the past and present from which people may be liberated when Christ is celebrated as Savior and as healer. When people are weakened by dark powers, by economic and bodily woes—today, for example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic—or by being at the poor end of global economies, people try to placate the forces over which they feel they have no control. Placating, however, they succumb. To remember Jesus Christ as one who takes on their flesh and their history, under whatever names seem appropriate, is the promise of an energy born within them when they are reborn of the water and the Spirit. With a good sense of their own historical significance and of what is positive in their past, people know the energies that

[37] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University, 1982) 1–132.

Christ assumes, transforms, and makes channels of God's eschatologically oriented triune life, the life that on this earth brings the promise of a more just exchange.

Indeed, in the face of all injustice, we know ourselves justified only by the justice that God imparts. In the face of all sin, we know no other forgiveness than God's, embodied in various efforts at true reconciliation and healing. In various messages for the annual Day of Peace at the beginning of the calendar year, John Paul II spoke of the common concern of peoples for peace, noting that peace is founded in justice and that justice is not possible without forgiveness.[38] Key words of these messages are *communion, peace, justice,* and *forgiveness.* Long ago Thomas Aquinas asked how Christ's death restores justice.[39] He replied that it is not of an order of distributive justice that the gospel speaks but of an order of divine justice, in that mercy prevails and the whole order of human relations changes course, incorporating not merely a "proper" distribution of goods, but one grounded in the example of Christ's self-donation and self-emptying, rather than in a niggardly apportionment according to each one's rights. If, in the Christian perspective, we wish to acknowledge others' rights to life and a place in human society, this wish is grounded not in merit but in an impulse of generosity that is truly divine, even when it is lodged in human hearts.

At bottom, then, there is the question, What liberating and creative forces emerge from keeping memories alive and grafting them onto the memorial of Christ or, from another point of view, grafting the memorial of Christ onto them? In sacramental and spiritual terms, what power of the Spirit at work in humanity and in creation is revealed in the act of keeping memory? To what is the memorial of Christ's Pasch brought, and what is brought from the story of a people to the memorial of Christ?

In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, base or small ecclesial communities have assumed an important role in the new evangelization, which requires the church itself to be evangelized or challenged more deeply by the gospel. It is in these communities that the word is heard, commented on, shared, and seen to take root in peoples' lives, healing their memories. As people listen to the gospel, they recall their own stories and their ancestors and rediscover vital energies from their past and re-form their relations to earth and cosmos. Catechizing of children, preparation for marriage, preparation of catechumens for baptism, and the reconciliation of those at odds with one another are largely done in ecclesial communities. While, under present regulations about ordination, these communities may not themselves celebrate the Eucharist, their hearing and understanding of the word, and

[38] For example, John Paul II, "No Peace without Justice, No Justice without Forgiveness," World Day of Peace Message 2002, *Origins* 31 (2001) 461–66.

[39] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3. q. 48. a. 2.

their appropriation of it into their lives, is one with their gathering for the Lord's Supper. The word, as they hear and live it, has to be reflected in the celebration and allowed to enliven it. Ministries are supplied from among the people, and any celebrant who does not listen to them and is not taught by them is ineffectual in celebrating with them.[40]

ESCHATOLOGICAL SPIRIT

The creative possibilities of eucharistic celebration are grounded in the gift of the eschatological Spirit to the church, that is, in the concrete, to the assembly and to each of its members. In the traditional Eastern forms of epiclesis,[41] the Father is asked to send the Spirit upon the gathered people and upon the gifts they have held up before God, seeing already in them a sign of Christ's own sacrifice or self-gift. The two petitions are inseparable; indeed, it might be better to speak of a twofold petition over the signs that speak of the people and of the Christ who dwells in and among them. The Spirit comes down upon the people made body in the bread and wine and in the other gifts they bring for the common table and for the service of others. The gifts do not exist without the people, and the people have no bodiliness as a people without the gifts. In other words, in bringing their gifts, the people of a church take on a common identity, a common entity, expressed in the bread and wine and in all that these express of a shared ecological, social, and historically conditioned existence.

The transforming power of the Holy Spirit is given meaning in the adjective *eschatological.* Foretold by the prophets, this is the Spirit whose abundance and charismatic gifts are associated with the expectation of messianic liberation, hope, and fulfilment. The concrete hopes of Israel for a reign of justice have to be subsumed into the Christian church's own hope, seen in the desire for a global and pluralistic community of peoples. The people of Israel hoped for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom that would bring with it an era of divine justice lived according to the covenant. While Christians do not equate this kingdom with any particular regime or nation, they hope for concrete realizations of justice and peace within the community of the peoples of the earth. The exercise of responsibility for this world in the name of God's reign is taken up to change such specific realities as social relations (oppression and marginalization of the poor on the economic front) and political policies. In a Christian assembly, social

[40] There is a vast bibliography on this subject. For liturgy, see two African works: Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1997); François Kabasele Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1998).

[41] For example, in the anaphoras attributed to Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom.

advocacy is related both to the memorial of the Crucified One who emptied himself for the sake of humanity and was raised up, and to the expectation of the coming in judgment of the Son of Man. Without the Spirit, such memorial and such hope are impossible.

The eschatological Spirit sets us free from sin and from all the violence and injustice it inflicts. In Christian prayer the hopes for creation, for being a people, and for a reign of justice cannot be brought to expression or to consummation without the charismatic gifts of the Spirit. Not only may this Spirit free us from external social, political, and economic bonds, but within the church itself and its assemblies the Spirit can free us from subservience to a code, a rigidly codified law, or rigid ecclesiastical hierarchies. For the gathering into Eucharist of the kind of memories mentioned above, it is the Spirit who sets us free from excessive rigidity and gives to some the creative power to speak of these memories.

For the ordering of celebration, the gift of this liberating and creative Spirit is to be seen in what the documents of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)[42] and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) say about the origin of new ministries within small communities and extended families.[43] In the emergence of new ministries suited to time and situation, and in the shaping of common structures, these episcopal conferences note the importance of the truly human and cultural embodiment of the family of Christ. It is within such communities that human bonding is lived and that the needs, hopes, and possibilities of true justice are known and given voice. As some of these documents note, the reality of eucharistic gathering depends on these communities. Whether they celebrate among themselves or come from such groupings to a larger gathering for the Lord's Supper, it is to them and the experience within them that people bring their food and drink and all

[42] The *Instrumentum laboris* is much stronger on the relation of life, mission, and ministry to small communities than is the final text. The toning down may well indicate some vacillation on the topic and the Roman Curia's desire to accentuate the role of parish and diocese in ecclesial life rather than the role of human communities. See Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), *The Church as Family of God: Instrumentum Laboris and Pastoral Letter* (Accra, Ghana: SECAM, 1998).

[43] There is ample documentation in: *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences* [FABC] vol. 1, *Documents from 1970–1991,* ed. Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arévelo; vol. 2, *Documents from 1992–1996,* ed. Franz-Jozef Eilers; and vol. 3, *From 1997–2001,* ed. Franz-Jozef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian, 1997, 2002). For a brief survey, see James H. Kroeger, "Theology of Local Church: FABC Perspectives," in his *Becoming Local Church: Historical, Theological, and Missiological Essays* (Quezon City: Claretian, 2003) 31–54. The final document of the FABC 2004 Synod on the Family can be found at http://www.ucanews.com (accessed August 10, 2006).

that these mean for them. The Spirit who moves them to a common hope and endeavor, to service and ministry, continues to inspire them within the service of the breaking of the bread. There is a necessary movement under the guidance of the Spirit from one setting to the other. If this movement or guidance is cut short or cut off, Eucharist cannot voice the desire for justice and the hope for justice founded in the life and work of a community.

HOW CHURCHES IN FACT CELEBRATE

In short, all that precedes is meant to suggest how eucharistic celebration marks the hope-filled relation of divine justice, with its implications for human order, to the basic exchange of human communion, to forgiveness and to peace. Such basic exchange is that of human communion, communion with one another through communion with earth's gifts, communion in shared and purified memories called forth when Christ is remembered in the part he took in the human drama. We can only come trembling to the Lord's Supper, and we only go joyous and hopeful from the Lord's table, rich with all we have learned there of the compassion and gift of Word made flesh and of the Spirit. Through the participation in the Lord's Supper, where Christ offers in his own self-gift the gift of forgiveness, we might well enlarge our capacity to ask, give, and receive forgiveness.

First, what is signified in sharing the things of earth is a whole life summed up at its truest and most vulnerable. Second, in remembering Christ, the core of ecclesial communion and unity is communion with Christ in the self-gift of his sacrificial death. By giving his given self in communion to the members of the church, he draws them into participation in his own self-donation to the Father and in the gift of the Spirit that is the Father's donation to the Son. Through this becoming one with the Father and the Son, as they are one in the Spirit (John 17), the church, in eating and drinking Christ's death until he comes, shines forth with that glory with which Christ shone forth on the cross.

Quite marvellously, by the sign of coming together at Christ's invitation to share the basics of life, bread, and drink, the Lord manifests himself to the church in the reality of his Pasch. Through this table communion and all it means about being one in the joys, sorrows, struggles, and hopes of living together on this earth and being one with it, Christ is present by his Spirit and in his own self-gift to and in his church. It is at the eucharistic gathering that the purification of memories has to be effected—memories of injustices committed and suffered—so that they can be replaced by the hope of reconciliation that comes from the impulse of a life divinely given. The church is never once and for all the sacrament of human communion and reconciliation. It continues to become such in new ways and places.

But what then of how communities celebrate? There are many reasons why our eucharistic celebrations do not resound with a call to eucharistic justice. Unhappily the Eucharist often fails to evoke justice by the evocation of which the symbols are redolent because we celebrate badly. As with any tradition, to see the liturgical tradition whole, in its flaws as well as in its power, requires that we take "a suspicious distance" from it, so that we can constructively criticize it. In looking at the eucharistic tradition, we can see that infidelity to eucharistic signs hinders the Eucharist from bearing the full weight of the revelation of justice.

With an excessively rigid and ritualistic codification of the fundamental sacramental structure of assembly, there may be inadequate attention to the role of the word in peoples' lives and considerable inequality in the way the table is shared. That all are one at this moment and that there is no discrimination seems to be set aside by the odd rules about precedence in taking communion in the latest instruction on the Roman Missal. Given also the kind of bread and wine offered and blessed, the truth of the signs of bread and wine, indeed the presence of truth itself, is camouflaged. When liturgical language is too strongly controlled, the creative Spirit is not left free to enable peoples to find their own tongue in which to pray. The remembrance of Christ can be made in a way that befogs other memories, the memories harbored by those beside us at table or of those who feel alienated from the table.

Is it possible to go beyond these hindrances to authentic memorial? The eschatological orientation of the memorial of Christ's Pasch is either a rather superficial affirmation of a principle or the reality of a community that is empowered to find its own inner resources in the very act of remembering and communing.[44] Often, in the three elements of materials used, community structures imported, and memories suppressed lies the incapacity for a retrieval of a missionary church that is engaged in the reconstruction of humanity in a globalized society. Only in the recovery of the particular is the move to a greater community possible, so the engagement through the gift of the Spirit in recovering the possibilities of a people's own history is the first move toward rebuilding universal community in a truly human way that is not a universal subjugation of all particulars to economic laws. Of this rebuilding, eucharistic communion is to be a sign and an impetus. The material over which the commemorative blessing is invoked is symptomatic of either an unconquerable malaise or an inner

[44] For the extent to which Christian mission has sometimes led to the suppression of specific cultural and historical identity, and so to the destruction of strengths of reconstruction native to peoples, see F. Eboussi Boulaga, *A contretemps: L'enjeu de Dieu en Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 1991). Paradoxically, the sacraments as celebrated become signs of suppression.

dynamic force of the Spirit to create anew. It signifies either subjugation or resurgence. It speaks of the possibility of either remaining a people living only from another's history or of becoming a people nourished by its own inner historical dynamism. It expresses either the reality of acting as a community that takes cognizance of symbolic exchange or that of remaining a no-people living out everything as imported and imposed.

CONCLUSION

Despite such shortcomings, Christian disciples, confident in the ongoing work of the Sprit, may yet find themselves called to justice in recognizing the Lord in the breaking of the bread. They ask themselves, with whom does Christ align himself in the *kenosis* that we remember as sacrifice? I have suggested that an eschatological hermeneutic of the sacrament brings to light the hope it embodies and its orientation to a search for justice. The celebration of the Eucharist that in truth evokes a commitment to justice fits into the life of a church that sees itself as a community of disciples, a household of God, a sacrament of the community, and reconciliation of peoples. The Eucharist presupposes a community engaged in action for justice, a praxis of liberation from violence and injustice. Such a community will strive to make liturgies forceful commemorations of the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ, into which will be gathered a memory of all the forgotten and unnamed suffering past and present. In tandem with these efforts, knowing that none should be left without the Eucharist, members of these communities possess the strong sense of the freedom that comes with the gift of the Spirit and helps them develop community structures that are participatory and respectful of a variety and multiplicity of gifts. The Christ who "out of the two made one" by reconciling Jew and Gentile today makes "out of the many one" by forging a global community of justice, peace, reconciliation, and truth. From their memorial of Christ, those who suffer injustice and alienation know the Lord to be one with them in the form he took of a slave unjustly condemned to die "outside the camp." The eschatological orientation of the Eucharist, the commitment to justice that it is intended to evoke, offers a possibility of ongoing liturgical renewal within living communities of faith.