

SYNOD OF BISHOPS
XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
THE EUCHARIST:
SOURCE AND SUMMIT
OF THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH
LINEAMENTA
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Preface

At the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, towards the end of the working session in October, 2001, the synod fathers were asked to suggest a topic for the next assembly. Among the various proposals was the subject of the Eucharist. Afterwards, in the accustomed consultation of the episcopal conferences, the Eastern Churches sui iuris, the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General, a major priority was also given to the Eucharist. The members of the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat had the same preference. The Holy Father then decided to choose this topic for the collegial discussion of the bishops in their gathering for the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly. Its formulation comes from the teaching and language of the Second Vatican Council: Eucharistia: fons et culmen vitæ et missionis Ecclesiæ.

Subsequently, the Council of the General Secretariat, assisted by experts, treated the subject in various work sessions, resulting in this present Lineamenta document.

This first step in the general consultation will allow the particular Churches around the world to become a part of the synodal process through their reflections, prayers and timely recommendations in the preparation of the Instrumentum Laboris, the document which is to serve as the agenda of the synodal assembly.

In the history of the Synod of Bishops, the consultation for the upcoming synodal assembly is somewhat novel insofar as the topic to be treated is also the subject of a recently published papal encyclical [Ecclesia de Eucharistia](#), on the Eucharist and its vital relation to the Church. Because of the encyclical's direct influence on the consultation and on the synod's work, this fact merits consideration.

Not surprisingly, a synod is called to treat material which is part of the ordinary papal magisterium. What is unusual is the timing and the announcement. Shortly after the Holy Father writes on the Eucharist, he proposes the same subject for a synod. The entire matter is of great importance for the Holy Father, the bishops and the Church.

The encyclical clearly manifests the desire of the Pope to urge its readers, the members of the universal Church, to re-dedicate themselves with new spiritual vigor and love to the Eucharistic mystery so vital to the Church. This act of the ordinary magisterium is concerned with repeating to the People of God, in a manner adapted to the times, a perennial and necessary truth for the Church's continuation in history.

*Many reasons exist for calling the pastors together to treat a subject so decisive for the life and mission of the Church. By its nature, a synodal assembly is consultative. On this occasion the Holy Father is not calling the bishops to make recommendations on how to present doctrine but to consider the needs and **pastoral** implications of the Eucharist in celebration, worship, preaching, charity and various works in general.*

The following point deserves consideration. Given the similarity in titles, the question inevitably arises as to why the Holy Father has chosen a topic already treated. The response comes from observing the present state of affairs in the Church. Today, the Church is undeniably experiencing a certain "Eucharistic need" based not on an incertitude regarding the presentation of doctrine—as occurred in the period of the Second Vatican Council—but on a Eucharistic practice which calls for a renewed attitude of love that is expressed in acts of faith in the One who is present for those continuing to search for him in our world: "Master, where do you live?"

*This Lineamenta is intended to encourage episcopal conferences, the Eastern Churches sui iuris, the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General to invite the participation of all in the Church so that they can enter into discussion and take a pastoral inventory. In this way, the responses of these entities to the questions in the Lineamenta might be **indicative** and complete, thereby ensuring a fruitful synod.*

*To properly prepare for the next stage in the synod process, these responses should arrive at the General Secretariat before **31 December 2004**.*

With this consultation the path towards the Synod continues in the particular Churches, where the Bishops, as Pastors of the flock, prepare themselves, in collegiality with their fellow bishops and in union with the Holy Father, to reflect on this great Sacrament which gives life to the Church.

25 February 2004

Jan P. Card. Schotte, C.I.C.M.
General Secretary

INTRODUCTION

WHY A SYNOD ON THE EUCHARIST?

1. The unseen God manifested himself in the Word-Made-Flesh, His Son, Jesus Christ. After the ascension, “what until then was visible of our Redeemer was changed into a sacramental presence.”^[1] For this reason, “We see one thing and understand another. We see a man (Jesus), but we make an act of faith in God.”^[2]

The Church, the Sacrament of humanity’s salvation in Jesus Christ, exists through her worship centred on the Incarnate Word, Sacrament of the Father. The Roman Canon and the anaphora of St. John Chrysostom state that the Mass is an *oblationem rationabilem* and a “*logikèn latreían*,” brought about by the divine word, in which spirit and reason participate. He who is the Word speaks to the individual and awaits an intelligible, reasoned (*rationabile obsequium*) response. In this way, human words becomes adoration, sacrifice and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). This “spiritual worship” (cf. *Rm* 12:1) is at the core of an active, intelligible “participation” by the People of God in the Eucharistic mystery,^[3] reaching its fullness in the reception of Holy Communion.^[4]

2. The Second Vatican Council treated the Eucharistic Mystery in Chapter III of the Constitution *De Sacra Liturgia*. What is said in this document about the liturgy, the *source and summit* of the Church’s actions, concerns for the most part the celebration of the Eucharist or, as the Eastern Churches say, the “Divine Liturgy.” The topic of the next synod is to be the Eucharist in which the People of God participate in virtue of Baptism. The Eucharist is the “summit” of Christian initiation and all apostolic activity, because the Sacrament presupposes membership in the communion of the Church. At the same time, it is the “source,” because the Sacrament is nourishment for her life and mission.^[5] For this reason, the Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, referring to the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* in which he made the appeal for people to know, love and imitate Christ, states that “a renewed impetus in Christian living passes through the Eucharist.”^[6]

3. The Sixth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops treated the topic of reconciliation and, in this context, the Sacrament of Penance, the ordinary means of returning to communion with Christ and the Church, a communion which culminates in the Eucharist. This subject is amply presented in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Pœnitentia*. The Fifth Ordinary General Assembly, on the Family, also gave attention to the basic communion of blood and spirit which has the source of its vitality in another sacrament, Matrimony, a great mystery and sign of the union between Christ and his Church (cf. *Eph* 5:32). The last four ordinary general assemblies have reflected on the basic groups which make up the Church’s communion, namely, the lay faithful, the ministerial priesthood, those in the consecrated life and bishops. The Eucharist presupposes ecclesial communion, a communion which the Sacrament brings to perfection.^[7] It is understandable, then, that a synodal assembly should treat the Sacrament which manifests the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church and causes unity and holiness to increase.

Such a treatment will permit:

a. that the Eucharist maintain its central place in the eyes of the Church, at the universal and local levels—especially in parishes and communities—even in the preparatory phase of the synod;

- b. that a necessary increase of faith in the Eucharist may result;
- c. that, in giving preeminence to this topic, the synodal assembly might give special importance to the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity and contribute to the renewal program in the life and Christian mission of individuals and communities; and
- d. that the Church's teaching on the Sacred Eucharist might be taken up anew and more profoundly received in its entirety. This Sacrament has always received special attention in apostolic times, in the Church Fathers and holy mediaeval writers, in Councils—particularly Trent and Vatican II—and in the principal inter-dicasterial and pontifical documents, including the recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, [*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*](#).
4. The topic chosen by Pope John Paul II for the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is *Eucharistia fons et culmen vitae et missionis Ecclesiae*. Three aspects emerge from those deserving consideration:
- a. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, through his actions at the Last Supper and particularly his words “Do this in Memory of me,” did not intend simply to institute a fraternal meal but a liturgy, a true act of worship and adoration of the Father “in spirit and in truth” (*Jn* 4:24);
- b. Liturgical reform did not lead to the destruction of the secular patrimony of the Catholic Church but was intended to foster, in faithfulness to Catholic tradition, the renewal of the liturgy for the sanctification of Christians; and
- c. The Lord has desired his Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament so that God-Emmanuel might be, today and always, a God near to humanity as its Redeemer and Lord.
5. The context for the preparation and actual work of the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is the entire magisterium and teaching on the Eucharist, particularly that of the Second Vatican Council, which has made the Church more aware that “at the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, Our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until he should come again...”^[8] As a beloved spouse, the Church knows she is to celebrate “the memorial of his death and resurrection, a sacrament of life, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.”^[9]

Eucharistic doctrine, with its biblical, patristic and theological foundations, together with its catechetical and mystagogical connotations, permeates all the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar magisterium and is intended to lead to a deeper appreciation of the mystery of the Eucharist and to adoration of this mystery, as illustrated in the traditions of the East and West, in the one Catholic Church. From the post-conciliar documents which have captured the spirit of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the following remain basic for understanding the Eucharist and Eucharistic celebrations: the Encyclical Letter [*Mysterium Fidei*](#) of Pope Paul VI and the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, published in 1970 and revised in 2000, containing the norms to be observed for Holy Mass in the Roman rite. These texts, together with the [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#),^[10] the [*Codes of Canon Law*](#) in the Latin Church^[11] and the Eastern Churches,^[12] the *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, published in 1996, have provided a deeper understanding of Eucharistic doctrine and offered pastoral guidelines to which Pope John Paul II has made reference in his Encyclical [*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*](#).^[13]

CHAPTER I

THE SACRAMENT OF THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT

The Eucharist in Salvation History

6. The Old Testament offering and sacrifice made to God as a sign of thanksgiving, supplication and reparation for sin is the remote preparation for the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. This is recalled in the figure of the Servant of Yahweh who offers himself in sacrifice, pouring out his blood for the new covenant (cf. *Is* 42:1-9; 49:8) in place of humanity and for its benefit. The religious festivals of the Jews, especially those of the Passover *memorial* of Exodus and the sacrificial banquet, serve to express thanksgiving for God's favours and provide access to communion with him through the victim sacrificed (cf. *1 Cor* 10:18-21). The Eucharist also unites a person to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, according to Jewish worship and tradition, the blessing (*beraka*) is both the communication of divine life to humanity and humankind's wondrous acknowledgment and adoration of the God's work. This happens in the sacrifice in the temple and the meal in the home (cf. *Gn* 1:28; 9:1; 12: 2-3; *Lk* 1:69-79). At one time, the blessing was *eulogia*, that is, "praise to God", and *eucharistia*, that is, "thanksgiving." In Christianity, the latter term will come to identify the form and content of the anaphora or the Eucharistic prayer.

At the time of Christ, the Jews also had a sacred meal or a sacrificial banquet (*tôdâ*) (cf. for example, *Ps* 22; *Ps* 51) which included a thanksgiving and an unbloody sacrifice of bread and wine. This allows for another aspect of the Last Supper to be understood—that of a sacrificial banquet of thanksgiving. The Old Testament rite of pouring out blood in sacrifice serves as the background for the topic of the covenant which God gratuitously makes with his people (cf. *Gn* 24:1-11). This rite, foretold by the prophets (cf. *Is* 55:1-5; *Jer* 31:31-34; *Ez* 36:22-28) and absolutely necessary to understand the Last Supper and the entire revelation of Christ, bears the name (*berit* in Hebrew, translated in Greek as *diathêke*) used to designate the body of New Testament writings. At the Last Supper, the Lord sealed the covenant, his testament with his disciples and the entire Church.

The prophetic signs and the memorial foretold in the Old Testament (the supper in Egypt, the gift of manna, the annual celebration of the Passover) are fulfilled in the Church's sacraments or sacred mysteries. They have the God-given power of sanctifying, transforming and deifying in virtue of the death and resurrection of the Lord, celebrated each Sunday, indeed daily, in the Christian Pasch. St. Ambrose states: "Now consider which is more excellent, the bread of angels or the Flesh of Christ, which is indeed the body of life.... One is figure, the other is truth."^[14]

The One Sacrifice and Priesthood of Jesus Christ

7. The historic fact of the Last Supper is narrated in the Gospels of St. Matthew (*Mt* 26:26-28), St. Mark (*Mk* 14:22-23), St. Luke (*Lk* 22:19-20) and in St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (*1 Cor* 11:23-25), all of which provide some understanding of the event. Jesus Christ gives himself (cf. *Jn* 13:1) to humanity as nourishment; he *gives his body and sheds his blood for us*. This covenant is *new* because it inaugurates a new state of communion between God and humanity (cf. *Heb* 9:12). Furthermore, this covenant is new and supercedes the old, because the Son gives himself on the cross. To those who receive him, he gives the power of becoming children of the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:12; *Gal* 3:26). The command, "Do this in memory of me," refers to fidelity to the action and its continuity, until the Lord comes again (cf. *1 Cor* 11:26).

With this act, the Church reminds the world that an indestructible friendship exists between God and humanity, because of the love of Christ, who conquered evil through his offering of self. In this sense, the Eucharist provides the unifying power of the human race and is also the place of that unity. The new character and meaning of the Last Supper are immediately and directly tied to the redemptive act of the cross and resurrection of the Lord, God's "last word" to humanity and the world. In this way, Christ, longing to make his Passover and to offer himself (cf. *Lk* 22:14-16), becomes our Pasch (cf. *1 Cor* 5:7). *The cross began at supper* (cf. *1 Cor* 11:26). Jesus Christ, in an unbloody manner at Supper and in his blood on the

cross, is at one and the same time both priest and victim offered to the Father: “a sacrifice that the Father accepted, giving, in return for this total self-giving by his Son, who ‘became obedient even to death’ (*Phil* 2:8), his own paternal gift, that is to say the grant of new immortal life in the resurrection, since the Father is the first source and the giver of life from the beginning.”^[15] For this reason, the death of Christ is inseparable from his resurrection (cf. *Rm* 4:24-25), which brings new life and in which we are immersed at Baptism (cf. *Rm* 6:4).

8. The Gospel of St. John treats the mystery of the Eucharist in Chapter 6. On a plan similar to that of the Last Supper, St. John recounts the miracle of the bread distributed to a crowd, while Jesus speaks of the bread which gives life, that is, his flesh and blood, true food and true drink. The person who has faith in Jesus Christ eats his flesh and obtains eternal life. Understanding the discourse on the Eucharist is difficult: it is accessible only to the one who seeks Jesus and not himself (cf. *Jn* 6:14, 26). After Pentecost, this awareness is expressed in the frequent meeting of the baptized, according to apostolic teaching, in fraternal communion and for the *fractio panis* (cf. *Acts* 2:42.46; 20:7-11), at the “Lord’s Supper” (cf. *1 Cor* 11:20). This is the foundation of the *apostolic dimension* of the Eucharist. The New Testament accounts of the Eucharist, as thanksgiving and sacramental memorial, highlight the fact that recognizing the Lord’s Body and Blood in communion with the consecrated bread and wine is a recognition of his presence. By the same token, it is a grave error, indeed a condemnation, to consider the “Lord’s Supper” as any other meal. (Cf. *1 Cor* 11:29). Furthermore, the Apostle states as a known fact that the Lord’s presence in his Body and Blood does not depend on the conditions of those who receive him. Communion makes them one body, because the life of Christ flows in them. They are one heart and one mind (cf. *Acts* 2:46; 4:32-33), to the point of making the communion of goods possible, after the manner of the apostolic Church, who shared the joys and sufferings of her members, namely, in a lived charity (cf. *1 Cor* 12:26-27).

The Bible provides basic truths about the Eucharist, making the *Sacrament of the Altar* a unique, sacrificial, priestly reality; thanksgiving and praise of the Father; the memorial of the Paschal Mystery; and the abiding Presence of the Lord.^[16]

Thanksgiving and Praise to the Father

9. In the Church’s memory, the words of Jesus’ presence in our midst are at the centre of the Eucharistic celebration: “This is my Body...; this is the cup of my Blood...” Jesus offers himself as the true, final sacrifice, bringing to fulfilment all the types found in the Old Testament. All unattainable desires are satisfied in him.

According to the prophet (cf. *Is* 53:11ff), Jesus is to suffer for many and demonstrate that the longed-for, true sacrifice and worship is accomplished in him. He himself is the one who *stands before* God, *interceding* not for himself but for all. This intercession is a true sacrifice, a *prayer*, a thanksgiving-celebration to God in whom we and the world are restored. The Eucharist is therefore a *sacrifice* to God in Jesus Christ for receiving the gift of his love.

10. Jesus Christ is the Living One, who is in glory, in the sanctuary of heaven, which he has entered through his blood (cf. *Heb* 9:12). In this eternal, unchangeable state as high priest (cf. *Heb* 8:1-2), “he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever” (*Heb* 7:24ff). He offers himself *to the Father* and continues to work, because of the infinite merits of his earthly life, the redemption of humanity and the cosmos, which are transformed and restored in him (cf. *Eph* 1:10). This means that the Son, Jesus Christ, is mediator of a new covenant for those who have been called to an eternal inheritance (cf. *Heb* 9:15). His sacrifice endures into eternity in the Holy Spirit who reminds the Church all that the Lord has done as high and eternal priest (cf. *Jn* 14:26; 16: 12-15). St. John Chrysostom notes that the one who truly offers the divine liturgy is Jesus Christ; he who celebrated the Eucharist “during that supper, works the same miracle today. We have holy orders but he is the one who sanctifies and transforms the offering.”^[17] Therefore, “it is not a figure or some kind of sacrifice, but a true sacrifice.”^[18]

God saw fit to accept the immolation of his Son as a victim for sin. The Church prays that this sacrifice leads to the salvation of the world. Sacrifice and sacramental renewal are one and the same, instituted in the Supper which Christ commanded his Apostles to celebrate in his memory as a sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, atonement and expiation.^[19] Therefore, because of the Lord's sacrificial love, "the Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to the sacrifice nor does it multiply it."^[20] Sacrifice is the primary act; afterwards, comes the meal in which we take as food the Lamb immolated on the Cross.

The Memorial of the Paschal Mystery

11. "Doing in Christ's memory" means remembering his entire life. These mysteries of redemption are made present, in their own way, throughout the year, at Mass. In a special manner, the Mass is a memorial—according to St. Paul—of his act of emptying himself (cf. *Phil* 2), the supreme gesture of love which made him obedient unto death on the cross. Each time we eat his Body and drink his Blood we proclaim his death (cf. *1 Cor* 11:26) and resurrection (cf. *Acts* 2:32-36; *Rm* 10:9; *1 Cor* 12:3; *Phil* 2:9-11), until he comes again. He, then, is the sacrificial Paschal Lamb (cf. *1 Cor* 5:7-8) who stands, because he is risen (*Rev* 5:6).

The institution of the Eucharist took place at the Last Supper. The words pronounced by Jesus are an anticipation of his death. These words, however, would have been empty, if his love did not have the power to bring him from death to the resurrection. For this reason, Christian tradition calls the death and resurrection of Christ *mysterium paschale*. This expression means that the Eucharist is more than a simple supper. Its *cost* was a death overcome in resurrection. From the open side of Christ, the Church is born; from here come the sacraments which build up the Church—Baptism and the Eucharist, the gift and bond of charity (cf. *Jn* 19:34). Thus, in the Eucharist we adore he who died but is now alive for evermore (cf. *Rev* 1:18). This is expressed in the Roman Canon immediately after the consecration: "In this sacrifice, O Father, we your people and your ministers, recall his passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into glory; and from the many gifts you have given us we offer to you, God of glory and majesty, this holy and perfect sacrifice: the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation."

During this "mystical supper,"^[21] Jesus Christ brings together in his Person the past of the Old Covenant, the present of the New Covenant and the future of the things to come.^[22] With the Eucharist, we enter into another dimension of time not subject to our measurement, in which the future, illuminated by the past, is offered to us as the unchanging present. In this way, the mystery of Christ, Alpha and Omega, becomes contemporaneous to each person in every age and time.^[23] Time grows short (cf. *1 Cor* 7:29), we await the resurrection of the dead and even now live the life of heaven. "This mystery makes heaven of earth."^[24]

The Abiding Presence of the Lord

12. In the sacraments Jesus Christ acts through sensible signs which, without changing their appearances, take on a capacity that leads to sanctification. Christ is present in the Eucharist, Body and Blood, soul and divinity, giving himself and his life to all. In the Old Testament, God sent those who would point out his presence: in the cloud (*shekinà*), in the tent, in the temple. In the New Testament, in the fullness of time, he comes to live among humanity as the Word-Made-Flesh (cf. *Jn* 1:14), becoming Emmanuel indeed (cf. *Mt* 1:23), speaking through the Son, his heir.

To make understandable what takes place in the Sacrament in receiving Holy Communion, St. Paul states: "He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (*1 Cor* 6:17), in a new life which comes from the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine had a deep perception of this mystery, earlier understood by St. Ignatius of Antioch and later developed by the many monks, mystics and theologians who came after him. The Divine Liturgy is Christ's presence "which gathers (*ekklesiázon*) all of creation,"^[25] beckons all to assemble around the holy altar and "providentially unites them to himself and to one another."^[26] St. John Chrysostom says: "When you are about to approach the holy table, believe that the King of creation is present there."^[27] For this reason, adoration is inseparable from communion.

The Real Presence of Jesus Christ is truly a great mystery!^[28] The Second Vatican Council used the same word as the Council of Trent to describe the mystery: through *transubstantiation* the Lord is made present in his Body and Blood.^[29] The Eastern Fathers speak of the *metabolismos*^[30] of the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood. These are two significant ways of reconciling mystery and reason, since, as Pope Paul VI has affirmed, the Eucharistic presence "constitutes in its own way the greatest of miracles."^[31]

CHAPTER II

THE EUCHARIST: A GIFT TO THE CHURCH, ALWAYS TO BE DISCOVERED

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church

13. Since the Last Supper, the Church has used many names to refer to the Sacrament: the Lord's Supper, the Breaking of Bread, the Holy Sacrifice and Oblation, the Eucharistic Assembly, Holy Mass, the Mystical Supper and the Holy and Divine Liturgy.^[32] The preferred term, however, is the *Eucharist*, to indicate that the Sacrament is above all "to give thanks" (from the Greek word *Eucharistein*). This explains the fact that the Eucharist begins to be celebrated by the baptized on Sunday mornings without catechumens and penitents. The procedure for celebration seems already to be described in the Emmaus account in St. Luke's Gospel (cf. *Lk* 24:25-31). On Easter Sunday evening, the risen Lord appears to the disciples. They listen to him evermore intently, until he finally reveals himself in the act of giving thanks and breaking bread. According to the *Apostolic Tradition*, the Eucharist is the revelation of the Father in the mystery of his Son, who redeems humanity. At the same time, it is the Church's act of thanksgiving for this salvific redemption.^[33] In this document, considered one of the oldest testimonies after the apostolic age, the Church's unceasing connection to the Eucharist is repeatedly emphasised. After the consecration, the presence of the Holy Spirit is invoked to make the Church worthy to make the offering.

St. Ignatius of Antioch witnesses to the obligation of participating in the Eucharist so as to strengthen harmony in the faith and to conquer the divisions provoked by Satan. He invites all to live the Eucharist in unity, because the Body and Blood of Christ are one, and because there is one altar and one bishop. He also exhorts the community to recognize in the Eucharist the flesh of Jesus Christ which suffered for sins, but is now risen.^[34] The Eucharist is spiritual nourishment for eternal life, a universal sacrifice foretold by the prophet Malachi, the font of true peace.^[35] The celebrated passage from St. Justin describes the Sunday Eucharist, the day on which the creation of the world and the resurrection of Jesus Christ take place.^[36] St. Irenaeus uses the Eucharist to affirm the reality of the incarnation against Gnosticism. He also repeatedly underlines Christ's Real Presence in the Body and Blood, and the necessity of partaking of the Eucharist, if our body is to enjoy a resurrection.^[37] St. Cyprian insists on identifying the bread and wine with the Body and Blood of Christ and cites two effects of communion: strength for martyrs and unity for Christians.^[38]

14. The official recognition of the Church led to the first theological reflection which eventually determined future Eucharistic doctrine on the Christ's Real Presence, on the manner in which it is realized and on the sacrificial aspect. This is seen in the catechesis of the Church Fathers which preceded, accompanied and followed Christian initiation. St. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, maintains that Eucharistic communion brings adherence to the Body of Christ, just as faith brings adherence to his soul,^[39] and confers immortality. The bishop, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, referring to St. Peter, recalls that in the Eucharist we become participants in the divine nature.^[40] St. John Chrysostom looks at the Eucharist from the perspective of baptismal initiation, as the food of a life which is received and sustained in the struggle against Satan. His words of explanation are particularly helpful in understanding the eschatological aspect of the Sacrament: "For when you see the Lord sacrificed, laid upon the altar, and the priest standing and praying over the victim, and all the worshippers empurpled with that precious blood, can you then think that you are still among men, and

standing upon the earth? Are you not, on the contrary, straightway translated to heaven, and casting out every carnal thought from the soul, do you not, with disembodied spirit and pure reason, contemplate the things which are in heaven?”^[41]

The Eucharistic reality, together with its sanctifying power coming from the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not to mention the *epiclesis* which makes all who receive communion one, is characteristic of Theodore of Mopsuestia’s thoughts on Eucharistic doctrine and ritual.^[42] For him, baptismal life is nourished in the Eucharist. St. Ambrose develops the Eucharist in the Old Testament economy and in eschatology.^[43] Jesus’ words pronounced by the priest, through which Jesus offers and is offered to the Father, are a proof of his Real Presence. Various Church Fathers begin to reflect on the transformation of the substance of the bread and wine. St. Augustine’s thoughts on the Eucharist focus primarily on its realism and symbolism,^[44] its connection to the Church-Body (*Christus Totus*)^[45] and the sacrificial nature of the Sacrament.^[46]

15. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Christ’s presence, which, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, differentiates it from the other sacraments.^[47] His use of the term “*repræsentare*” indicates that the Eucharist is not simply a pious recollection of the dead and risen Lord, who wishes to touch every person, but his effective and efficacious presence.^[48] The meaning of the Sacrament is threefold: “The first concerns the past, insofar as it commemorates the passion of the Lord, which was a true sacrifice... Accordingly, the celebration of this Sacrament is called Christ’s sacrifice. The second ...concerns the present effect, namely the unity of the Church in which people are brought together through this Sacrament...The third concerns the future, since this Sacrament is a prefigurement of the Divine Blessedness to be realized in heaven.”^[49] In the office of *Corpus Christi*, St. Thomas Aquinas has left a famous hymn which states this meaning in lyric form: *O Sacrum Convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis eius, mens impletur gratia et futuræ gloriæ nobis pignus dator.*

St. Bonaventure has also contributed to Eucharistic theology, pointing to the spirit of piety necessary for receiving Christ in Holy Communion. In addition to the Lord’s words at the Last Supper, he recalls that in the Eucharist the Lord’s promise is fulfilled: “I am with you all days even until the end of the age” (*Mt* 28:20).^[50] In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ is really and truly present in the Church.

The Sacrament of the Church’s Unity and Holiness

16. The Eucharist also reveals the nature of the Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, both at the local and universal levels. The recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, makes a particularly enlightening contribution to the Church’s magisterium in understanding the relation between the Eucharist and the Church. The greatness and beauty of the Catholic Church rests in the fact that she does not remain fixed in any one age or millennium. Rather, she continues, develops and penetrates the mystery more and more, proposing truths which are to be believed by the world and celebrated in the liturgy, thus making clear that the one Church of Christ endures in her.

St. Augustine explains the Eucharist to neophytes on Easter night in the following manner: “You must be enlightened as to what you have received. Listen therefore briefly to what the Apostle says, or better, what Christ says through his Apostle, on the Sacrament of the Lord’s Body: ‘One bread, though many, we are one body.’ Behold, this is everything. Though I have spoken to you briefly, do not count the number of words but their weight instead!”^[51] This sentence of the Apostle, according to the saintly Bishop of Hippo, is a summary of the mystery which they received.

From the Church’s very beginning, however, there are signs of resistance to this reality by those who preferred, instead, to close themselves off in a limited group of people (cf. *1 Cor* 11:17-22). Because of its unifying power,^[52] the Eucharist has always meant bringing persons together, overcoming barriers and leading people to a new *unity* in the Lord. The Eucharist is the Sacrament with which Christ unites us to himself in one Body and makes the Church *holy*.

The Apostolicity of the Eucharist

17. The Lord left the sacraments to the Apostles. In this manner, the Church received them, and for two thousand years has transmitted them in fidelity to the apostolic faith. From the day of the ascension, the Church has fixed her gaze on the Lord who said, “No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man” (*Jn* 3:13). Christ, risen and ascended into heaven with his glorified, earthly body, remains on earth in his Mystical Body, the Church, in her members (cf. *1 Cor* 12:5) and in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. He said beforehand: “If I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you” (*Jn* 16:7). He who made possible the *Corpus Verum* in the incarnation, now gives life to the *Corpus Mysticum*, the Church.

The apostolicity of the Eucharist and the Church is not simply a mark historical in nature, but the ongoing manifestation that Christ is present to each person in every age;^[53] it concerns the mystery of ecclesial communion. The Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* quotes an incisive phrase from St. Augustine: “You receive your own mystery.”^[54] This presence, a consequence of the incarnation, is therefore the mystery of faith in which the mystery of the Church is also revealed. In the Eucharistic celebration, then, the Church is full of wonder^[55] and made to contemplate: *Ave verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine*.

18. The Second Vatican Council has stated that the Church grows through the redemption at work in the Sacrament of the Altar.^[56] Pope Paul VI recalls that the Roman Missal is proof of an uninterrupted tradition of the Roman Church and “the theology of the Eucharistic mystery.”^[57] Pope John Paul II mentions the inseparable connection between the Eucharist and the Church using the aphorism, “the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist.” He then affirms that what is professed in the Nicene-Costantinopolitan Creed about the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, must also be applied to the Eucharist, above all the mark of apostolicity,^[58] “not because it did not originate in Christ...but because it is celebrated in conformity to the faith of the apostles.”^[59] Furthermore, “succession to the Apostles in the pastoral mission necessarily entails the Sacrament of Holy Orders.”^[60] In a real way, the Church’s mark of apostolicity is intrinsic to the profound communion of the Mystical Body and the cause of her interior transformation. This understanding clearly leads to the fact that the Eucharist is a ‘gift and mystery,’ “which radically transcends the power of the assembly.”^[61] The Eucharist is not brought about by the community from within, but is given to the community from above. This is emphasized in priestly ordination with which the Church provides a local community with a minister who can celebrate.

Consequently, “it cannot be forgotten that, if the Church makes the Eucharist, the Eucharist makes the Church to the point of becoming the criterion of confirmation for the same right doctrine.”^[62] For this reason, the Eucharist is a gift to be discovered personally as communion with Christ, the depth of mystery and existential truth.

The Catholicity of the Eucharist

19. No less important is the catholicity of the Eucharist or its relation to the universal and local Church. Communion, which has “not by chance become one of the names given to this sublime sacrament,”^[63] is also the nature of the Church. Even though the Church “continually lives and grows”^[64] from the Eucharist and manifests herself in it, the celebration of the Sacrament “cannot be the starting point for communion; it presupposes that communion already exists, a communion which it seeks to consolidate and bring to perfection.”^[65] The Second Vatican Council recalls that Catholic communion is expressed in the ‘bonds’ coming from a professed faith, an apostolic doctrine, the sacraments and ecclesiastical government.^[66] Holy Communion requires then “a context where the outward bonds of communion are intact,”^[67] especially in Baptism and Orders. These bonds are necessary in the Eucharist, which to be visibly catholic must be celebrated *una cum Papa et Episcopo*, the principles of visible unity on the universal and local levels. This is “intrinsically required for the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice (which) for its character of ecclesial

communion ..., while always offered in a particular community, is never a celebration of that community alone, ... but the image and true presence of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.”^[68]

20. In the first centuries of Christianity, utmost importance was given to having only one bishop and one altar in each city as an expression of the unity of the one Lord. In his gift of self in the Eucharist, Christ is entirely present in each place. Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, the entire mystery of the Church is also present. At the same time, Christ is uniquely present in each place; he cannot be received in discord. Precisely because Christ is undivided and unable to be separated from his members, the Eucharist renders its sign value only when it is celebrated in union with the whole Church.

Pope Paul VI, in the 1969 Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum*, expressed his desire that the Missal, revised according to the norms of Vatican II, be considered as a means of bearing witness to and affirming the unity of the Church and expressing, in the variety of languages, “one identical prayer.” Herein lies the meaning of observing liturgical and canonical norms concerning the Eucharist. When she gives the norms for the Eucharist, the Church takes to heart Jesus’ command to the Apostles of preparing for the Passover (cf. *Lk* 22:12).

Consequently: “the profound relationship between the invisible and the visible elements of ecclesial communion is constitutive of the Church as the sacrament of salvation. Only in this context can there be a legitimate celebration of the Eucharist and true participation in it. Consequently, it is an intrinsic requirement of the Eucharist that it should be celebrated in communion, and specifically maintaining the various bonds of that communion intact.”^[69]

CHAPTER III

THE EUCHARIST: THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH PROCLAIMED

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church

21. In presenting faith in the Eucharist and refuting doctrinal and pastoral errors which have appeared over time, the conciliar and papal magisterium of the Catholic Church draws primarily on the apostolic and patristic traditions of both East and West.

The Council of Trent, in three decrees, defined Eucharistic doctrine after the Protestant Reformation, particularly in regard to the true, real and substantial presence of the Lord Jesus, true God and true Man, in the species of bread and wine. It also affirmed that the *Body* of the Lord is present not only under the appearance of bread but also of wine and his *Blood* is present not only under the appearance of wine but also of bread. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ is also present in each species with his *soul* and *divinity*. Thus, Christ, the Father’s Word, true God and true Man, is present whole and entire under the two species and in each of them.^[70] The same Council also defined *transubstantiation*,^[71] the manner of receiving communion^[72] and the relation between the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass and the bloody sacrifice of the cross.^[73] It also affirmed that to consider the words of institution and the command to celebrate in his memory in a figurative, *typological* or metaphorical way would be erroneous and unworthy of the nature of the Sacrament.^[74] The institution of the Eucharistic sacrifice makes present the priesthood of Christ, while the redemptive power of the cross obtains for humanity the forgiveness of sins, of both the living and the dead.^[75]

The sacrificial nature of the Mass, developed in *Mediator Dei* by Pope Pius XII,^[76] is reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council. Christ is the one and only priest, the ministers act in his name, re-present the one

sacrifice of the New Covenant until he comes again,^[77] continually renewing the Church. Those validly ordained^[78] act *in persona Christi*.^[79]

The Nature of the Eucharist

22. Beginning with the Tridentine doctrine on the Eucharist, the Second Vatican Council clarifies the various modes of Christ's presence and specifically states the different characteristics of Eucharistic presence.^[80] Thus, the work of redemption, accomplished once and for all by Jesus Christ, continues to extend its effects each time the sacrifice of the cross, in which Christ Our Pasch is immolated, is celebrated on the altar in his memory.^[81] As for the sacramental effects, the Eucharist completes the building of the Church, the Body of Christ, and makes it grow.^[82] Therefore, it has salvific effects on the Church's members, conferring on them the grace of unity and charity insofar as the Eucharist is the spiritual food of the soul, the antidote for sin, the beginning of future glory and the fountain of holiness.

Pope Paul VI reaffirmed in the Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei* that the Mass is always the action of Christ and the Church, even in the exceptional case of being celebrated in private, that is, by the priest alone. Christ is present not in a spiritual or symbolic way, but in a real manner in the Eucharist, as the source of the unity of the Church, his Body.^[83] According to the faith which the Church has professed from the beginning, the Eucharist, unlike the other sacraments, is "the flesh of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins and whom the Father in his goodness has raised from the dead."^[84] Concerning the transubstantiation of the species, Paul VI, in both the Encyclical and the *Profession of Faith*, again emphasized the causal link with the Real Presence. Christ makes himself present in the Eucharist through a transformation of the entire substance of the two species.^[85]

The teaching of Pope Paul VI develops the subject of *transubstantiation* insofar as he declared that, after this substantial change, the two species "acquire new meaning and a new end in that they contain a new reality which justly is defined as *ontological*."^[86]

The Eucharist and the Incarnation of the Word

23. In bodily form Jesus was the Son of God present in the midst of humanity. This was affirmed not only by him but by both the Spirit and the Father, primarily at his Baptism and Transfiguration. Throughout history, the Lord is present day by day, "always, to the close of the age" (*Mt 28:20*). This presence, finding its source in the Father and continually re-given to him, is made present to every person, in every time, through the Holy Spirit. The divine fullness of the Word of Life was in the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. Since his ascension (cf. *Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-14*) he remains in the mystery of the Eucharist, the Sacrament par excellence of the presence of God in the midst of humanity. The ascension does not mean that Christ went to a heaven beyond our sight. The open heavens indicate the manner of his return: "In this...the Son of Man was known in a most exalted and holy manner as the Son of God: being *even more present (præsentior)* in his divinity, though more distant in his humanity...When I will ascend to my Father, then you can touch me in a *more perfect and exalted manner*."^[87] Therefore, at his ascension, Jesus Christ did not absent himself from the world but became present in a new manner.

Christ said: "You will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (*Mt 23:39*). The Apostles took the chalice of blessing from Christ, when he returned to them alive. From that moment, each time the Church gathers, she acclaims him as blessed. In the liturgy, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* is added to the triple *Holy, Holy Holy*.

24. Consequently, the Christian faith is not only believing in the existence of God or the historic person of Jesus, but in him, the Word of God made flesh, *continually abiding among us*. At the beginning of his earthly life he had a mortal body bound by space and time; now he has a risen body no longer bound by them. In fact, the risen Lord passes through locked doors, overcomes unspeakable distances in a lightning flash so as

to make himself known, heard, seen and touched by his own. From the moment of his resurrection and ascension, his presence is a new *reality*.

The First Letter of St. John seems to make reference to this divine manner of reaching people throughout history: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life...we proclaim also to you so that you might have fellowship with us” (1 Jn 1:1-3). St. Ambrose comments: “...we prove the truth of the mystery with the mystery of the incarnation itself. Was not this done in the ordinary course of nature, when the Lord Jesus was born of Mary? ... Very well, that which we re-present is the body, born of the Virgin... It is the true flesh of Christ, who was crucified and was buried. It is indeed the sacrament of his flesh.”^[88]

Consequently, the truth and reality of the incarnation of the Word is at the basis of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist and the Body of Christ, his Church,^[89] as they are also for the doctrine of the Eucharist and sacramental theology. St. Hilary maintained that “if it is true that the Word was made flesh (cf. Jn 1:14), then it is also true that in the food of the Eucharist, we receive the Word-Made-Flesh.”^[90] Pope John Paul II writes, “The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the annunciation, Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord’s Body and Blood.”^[91]

Lights and Shadows in Appreciating the Gift

25. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Pope and bishops have periodically made needed pronouncements to encourage application of the liturgical reform and to assess its results. In the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II, after having treated the positive elements or lights—primarily the participation of the faithful at the liturgy—passed “with profound grief” to the shadows, including, in some places, the complete abandonment of the practice of Eucharistic adoration and abuses which lead “to confusion with regard to sound faith and Catholic doctrine concerning this wonderful sacrament.”^[92] The lights which come from the Eucharist as sacrament need to be separated from the shadows which come from human deeds. For example, there are indications in Eucharistic catechesis and practice of an overemphasis on a single aspect, e.g., on the Eucharist as meal, on the baptismal common priesthood, on the sufficiency of a Liturgy of the Word only and on ecumenical practices at Mass which are contrary to the faith and discipline of the Church.

Ritual practices need to regain a sense of the totality of the mystery of the Eucharist, understood to be: the Word of God proclaimed, the community gathered with a priest who celebrates *in persona Christi*, the rendering of thanks to God the Father for his gifts, the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord, his sacramental presence as a result of the Lord’s words of consecration, the offering to the Father of the sacrifice of the Cross and communion with the Body and Blood of the risen Christ. The Holy Father states: “The mystery of the Eucharist—sacrifice, presence, banquet—does not allow for reduction or exploitation; it must be experienced and lived in its integrity...(consequently) the Church is firmly built up and it becomes clear what she truly is.”^[93]

26. In another place the Encyclical Letter clearly states: “The Church constantly draws her life from the redeeming sacrifice; she approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since this sacrifice is made present ever new, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it as the hands of the consecrated minister.”^[94] The Eucharist has the power of the Spirit who is transmitted to humanity in communion and in adoration of the Lord, who is really present.

The life of grace is transmitted in a sensible way through each sacrament, but in a more evident manner in the Eucharist. The Church does not give life to herself; she does not build herself up; she lives because of a reality which precedes her. “The joint and inseparable activity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, who is at the

origin of the Church, of her consolidation and her continued life, is at work in the Eucharist.”^[95] Therefore, the Church is not born from below; *communio* is a grace, a gift which comes from above.

“The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift—however precious—among so many others, but as the gift par excellence, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since ‘all that Christ is—all that he did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity and so transcends all times’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1085).”^[96]

The Eucharist: *Signum Unitatis*

27. “Come together in a common faith and in Jesus Christ...,” says St. Ignatius of Antioch, “breaking one bread which is the medicine of immortality.”^[97] St. John Chrysostom says, “this is the unity of faith: when we are one; when everyone acknowledges the bond which unites us.”^[98] Admittance into the unity of the Sacred Eucharist presupposes unity in the faith received at Baptism, because in the Sacrament we enter into communion with the one whom, according to our faith in him, we believe to be consubstantial with the Father. How would it be possible to receive Christ in communion with a person who has a different faith in him? We would be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord (cf. *1 Cor* 11:27). The Church, as a mother, has anguish and love for non-believers, catechumens and those far from the faith but she does not have the power to give communion to the non-baptized, nor to those teaching error nor to persons living an immoral life.^[99]

In receiving the *one* bread, we enter into *one* life and we become *one* Body of the Lord. The effect of the Eucharist is to join Christians who were once scattered into the unity of the one bread and the one cup. Consequently, communion can be received only in union with the whole Church, after overcoming any separation because of religion or morality.^[100]

28. With this in mind, we should treat *intercommunion* with the required humility and patience. Instead of a kind of experimentation which sacrifices the greatness of the mystery of the Eucharist, reducing the Sacrament to a mere human instrument, the preferred choice is to defer, in common prayer and hope, to “respect the demands from its being the sacrament of communion in faith and in apostolic succession.”^[101]

The Orthodox Churches and the ancient Eastern Churches share the same faith in the Eucharist, because they have true sacraments.^[102] Therefore, in certain cases, Eucharistic communion is possible.^[103] Nevertheless, what remains to be considered carefully is the relationship between Eucharistic hospitality and proselytism. Some Church communities of the Reformation, above all Lutherans, believe in Christ’s presence during the celebration, but, without the Sacrament of Orders, they have not conserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery.^[104] Though some successes in dialogue have occurred, no full agreement exists. Therefore, only in the case of the spiritual need of a well-prepared, non-Catholic member, that is, one who professes the same faith in the Eucharist, can Holy Communion be given. A Catholic, however, can only receive communion from a validly ordained minister.^[105]

CHAPTER IV

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Centre of the Cosmic Liturgy

29. The Lord’s incarnation and ascension have made communication possible between heaven and earth, a mystery hidden in the vision of Jacob’s Ladder (cf. *Gn* 28:12) and foretold by Christ himself (cf. *Jn* 1:51). The Book of Revelation, with the altar of the Lamb at the centre of the heavenly Jerusalem descending to earth, is the archetype of Christian worship: the worship of God by humanity and humanity’s communion with God.^[106] In the invocation *supplices te rogamus*, the Roman Canon mentions “the altar in heaven,” from

which descends the grace of the one who is risen and alive, fulfilling the wonderful exchange which saves humanity.

Christ is the *catholicus Patris sacerdos*.^[107] Through his human nature the Holy Spirit communicates divine life to creation and humanity, bringing it to perfection. The human nature of Christ is the source of salvation; he is the high priest and prime celebrator of liturgy. According to the Eastern Churches, the Trinitarian presence makes the Eucharistic liturgy a meeting point between earth and heaven: “the dwelling of God with men” (*Rev* 21:3). St. Dionysius the Areopagite states that God “is called beauty...because he draws (*kalei*) all things to himself ... and brings everything into a unity (*synaghei*).”^[108] The Greek terms are synonymous for calling the Church together. Christ’s presence at the gathering of the faithful for the Eucharist makes heaven of earth: “This mystery transforms earth into heaven for you...I will show you on earth the most venerable of heavenly things...I show you neither angels nor archangels, but their very Lord...”^[109]

Consequently, it is possible “strongly to experience the universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated *on the altar of the world*. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation.”^[110]

When the Eucharist is Validly Celebrated

30. The sacrament is “the visible sign of a sacred reality and the visible form of an invisible grace.”^[111] This definition of the Council of Trent is still valid, since it refers to the elements which constitute the Sacrament of the Eucharist: the minister, those who receive the Sacrament and the perceivable aspects.

As for the matter of the Sacrament, the Eucharist can only be celebrated with bread and wine, with some drops of water to express the union of the holy people with the sacrifice of Christ.^[112] The water, however, is not strictly necessary for validity.^[113] According to our Catholic faith, the form of the Sacrament is the words of consecration, which are essential and solely necessary.^[114] The minister is a validly ordained priest.^[115] Only those baptised can validly receive the Eucharist. The tradition of the Latin Church requires recipients to have the use of reason, that is, a certain knowledge of the mystery of faith, and to approach the Sacrament with a right intention and devotion. The person is also required to be in the state of grace. Mortal sin requires sacramental confession before receiving communion.^[116]

The preceding serves as a reminder that the liturgy is not the property of any individual, to be used to express one’s creativity whether in celebrations for communities or in those where only a few or no faithful are present.^[117] The Roman rite has specific norms for *concelebrated Masses* where many priests take part, manifesting the unity of the priesthood, of the sacrifice and the whole People of God.^[118] In the rites of the Eastern Churches, this high expression of unity is not advisable, “particularly when the number of concelebrants is disproportionately greater than the presence of the lay faithful.”^[119]

31. Chapter One of the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, on “The Importance and Dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration,” states that the Mass is the action of Christ and the People of God hierarchically assembled. It is the centre of the whole Christian life for both the universal and the local Church, and for each of the faithful. Certain “elements and parts of the Mass,”^[120] common to the Churches of both East and West, demonstrate the deep symbolism and pastoral aspects of the Eucharist which should not be altered in any way, from either a so-called “liturgical creativity” or from a critical spirit of what has been legitimately decreed.

The Penitential Rite

32. The purpose of the Penitential Rite, particularly in the Roman rite, is *to dispose* the community to listen to God’s Word and worthily to celebrate the Eucharist. The Byzantine, Armenian, Syro-Antiochine rites have prayers of preparation by the priest, along with acts of purification (washing and incense), which also appear in the Maronite, Chaldean and Coptic rites. The formula proposed in the Roman Missal leads to the

recognition of our state as sinners, the stirring of contrition in the heart and the desire for pardon from God and others. It does not include an examination of conscience as in sacramental confession, which requires more time and a thorough personal reflection. The Penitential Rite concludes with an invocation of God's mercy.^[121]

The Word of God and the Symbol of Faith

33. In the Eastern rites, the first part of the Mass is living the mystery of the incarnation of the Word, who comes into the world to make himself heard and to nourish humanity. The *Didache* states that in partaking of the food and drink of the Eucharist, we are offered the knowledge of God and receive it.^[122]

The Gospel has for its object the Word, the *Verbum*, the joyous proclamation (*euaggélion*) that God has descended to the earth to give us the food of eternal life. The Eucharist makes us friends of Christ, who is the Wisdom of God. The Word is the "Gospel of Hope!"^[123]

In response to this proclamation, the "symbol of faith" is recited after the homily for the Latins and Armenians, or after the transference of the gifts, for the Byzantines and other Eastern Rites.^[124] Unable to be interpolated or changed, the symbol of faith is one of the essential bonds for approaching the Eucharist, because the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist^[125] are the one Table of the one Lord, requiring "a single act of worship."^[126]

The Presentation of the Gifts

34. In the Roman rite the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the preparation of the gifts. At this time, the lay faithful assume an important role of bringing the bread and wine to the sanctuary, where the priest receives them to offer them to God the Father. It is possible to bring additional gifts for the assistance of the poor or other churches. The presentation of bread and wine, together with charitable gifts, underline the strong bond between the Eucharist and the commandment to love others. However, the liturgy provides that the bread and wine be placed directly on the altar, while the other gifts be brought to a more adapted spot, apart from the altar. This is to express the due veneration for the elements which will become the Body and Blood of Christ.^[127]

In addition to altar coverings, the Byzantine Liturgy calls for the use of a sacred cloth depicting the deposition of the body of Christ from the cross. On this cloth rest the gifts which will become the Body and Blood of the Lord through an act representing the spotless passion of the Lord and his tomb.^[128] To be worthy to offer these gifts for himself and for the sins of the people, the priest, after the "Great Entrance," addresses a prayer of supplication to the Father. Sin (*amartia*) must be something foreign to him; even his most minor faults are serious, according to John Chrysostom: "not by their nature but by the dignity of the priest who dares to commit them."^[129] The incensation of the holy Gifts follows, a prefigurement of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them^[130] and the prayer of adoration which arises in Christ to the Father. The preparation and presentation of the Gifts, then, is not merely a moment of passage but an integrating, highly symbolic part of the Sacrifice.

The Eucharistic Prayer

35. The priest, or the deacon in the Eastern rites, introduces the Eucharistic Prayer with the invitation: "Lift up your hearts." The *Apostolic Constitutions* state: "Turned towards the Lord, with fear and trembling we stand to offer the oblation."^[131] In the words of St. John Chrysostom, this dialogue serves "to present our souls upright before God and not recumbent, as they are inclined to be because of the everyday affairs of life...Consider who is standing next to you; you are in the company of someone who is about to call upon God, in the company of the Cherubim...No one should participate in these sacred, mystic hymns without fervour...Each one is to uproot from his spirit all that belongs to earth and transfer all to heaven. He is to think of himself as next to the very throne of glory and flying with the Seraphim so as to offer to God the

holiest hymn of majesty and splendour. For this reason we are called upon at this moment to compose ourselves...., namely, to stand with 'fear and trembling' (*Phil* 2:12), with an upright, attentive spirit."^[132]

To raise up the spirit is the meaning of the word *anáfora*: the act of all believers to lift up their hearts.^[133] The Gifts are scarcely carried to the altar on earth, when they are lifted to the altar of heaven, an action which takes place in tranquillity, in the imperturbable peace of heaven.^[134] Furthermore, the sacrifice is offered for one purpose: love and mercy. Thus, it is made acceptable in the Lord's sight. It is the sacrifice of praise, because it exalts the Lord's love.^[135]

36. The faithful respond in unison: "It is right and just." St. John Chrysostom observes: "rendering thanks, the Eucharist, is a communal act: the priest is not the only one to render thanks, all the people take part. The priest begins, and immediately afterwards the faithful give their assent: 'It is right and just.' After that, the priest begins the act of thanksgiving, the Eucharist."^[136] This expresses the participation of the People of God, its movement towards the heavenly Church, culminating in the *Sanctus*, the hymn of victory (*epiníko*), a blending of the angel's hymn in the vision of Isaiah and the acclamation of the people of Jerusalem to the Lord, who entered the Holy City to give himself freely to his passion.

At the conclusion of the anaphora, the faithful respond, "Amen" to the doxology and "with this acclamation they make their own everything said by the priest."^[137]

The Institution of the Eucharist

37. On the night before his passion, the Lord took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said.... Christ's command "Do this in memory of me" is addressed to his Apostles who, at the mystic supper, represent the whole Church, beginning with their successors. These words are a reference to the Eucharistic action which culminates in not only the change of the bread and wine into the Lord's Body and Blood, but also faith in his word.

From the beginning, the Church solemnly fulfills the Lord's actions, coming to understand them by meditating on them one by one, as if to be instructed over and over again in their meaning: the presentation of the Gifts, the consecration, the breaking of the bread and the distribution of Holy Communion.^[138] For this reason, the words "Take and eat" are not followed by the breaking of the host. If this be done, that moment would immediately become communion. Instead, at this highly charged mystical moment, the liturgy indicates that the celebrant is to bow his head and pronounce the words with a clear, moderate voice so as to promote contemplation, as does the Bishop on Holy Thursday, when he breathes over the Oil of Chrism. "By his actions and by his proclamation of the words, he (the celebrant) should impress upon the faithful the living presence of Christ."^[139] At this moment, indeed, the sacramental Sacrifice is accomplished.^[140]

The Epiclesis over the Consecrated Gifts

38. In the first centuries, before the consecration, an invocation was made with hands extended (*epiclesis*) to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to sanctify and transform the bread and wine into the Lord's Body and Blood. The basis of such a prayer is found in the Lord's words following the institution of this mystery: "When the Counsellor comes...he will bear witness to me" (*Jn* 15:26), "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (*Jn* 14:25) and "will glorify me" (*Jn* 16:14). Because of the controversies concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit between the fourth and fifth centuries, the prayer was placed after the consecration, as witnessed by some liturgical traditions. The majority of the anaphora prayers, however, keep it in its original place, as in the Roman Canon which invokes the Father to send the Spirit, "the power of his blessing."^[141]

The Church Fathers, who maintained the importance of the *epiclesis* to the Spirit, thought to unite it to the words of institution to render the sacramental sign complete. The Lord's words are spirit and life (cf. *Jn* 6:63). Christ works together with the Holy Spirit, while remaining the one consecrator of the Eucharist and

the dispenser of the Spirit. The Council of Trent has established that the epiclesis is not essential to the validity of the Eucharist.^[142]

St. Ambrose states: "...what are we to say of that divine consecration where the very words of the Lord and Saviour operate? For that Sacrament which you receive is made what it is by the word of Christ...Shall not the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change things which already are into what they were not? For it is not less difficult to create things than to change them... The Lord Jesus Himself proclaims: 'This is My Body.' Before the blessing with the heavenly words, another nature is spoken of; after the consecration, the Body is signified. He himself speaks of his Blood. Before the consecration, it has another name; after the consecration, it is called Blood. And you say, *Amen*, that is, *It is true*."^[143]

The Church of the Saints in the Eucharist

39. The Divine Liturgy remembers those who are alive in Christ. St. Dionysius the Areopagite states: "the ranks of saints are present and inseparably united, showing how the saints are one with him in a sacred union beyond this world."^[144] Consequently, the worship of the Lord cannot be opposed to the veneration of the saints. When they were living in this world, they sought to do all for the glory of God. Now, they rejoice that God is glorified in them.^[145] The *Intercessions* express the offering of the Eucharist in union with the whole Church, in heaven and on earth, for all her members, both living and dead.^[146] First of all, an invocation is made to the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, because her act of consecration to the Lord is analogous to our gift of self, which is always renewed in the Eucharistic sacrifice. We offer the Eucharist in memory of the saints to honour them and render thanks to God for their intercession. The ones who represent humanity's act of thanksgiving to God for his favours *intercede and speak* at our Eucharists.

Christ also gives himself in communion to the deceased, in the words of Cabasilas "in a manner known only to him,"^[147] St. John Chrysostom observes that if they are in the state of purification, they receive no less a part of grace than the living for the remission of their sins.^[148]

The Preparation for Communion

40. The Eucharist is the living presence of Christ in the Church. The Lord's passion led to his transformation into food for humanity (cf. *1 Cor* 10:16; 11:23ff). One of the traditional symbols of this mystery is the *fish*. The most ancient reference on the subject is found in the celebrated epigraph of St. Abercius, a bishop of the second century: "...he abundantly feeds me with fish from clear waters..., which the chaste virgin takes and offers each day to her friends so they can eat it with choice wine together with bread." Another symbol of self-giving is the *pellican*: "*Pie pellicane Jesu Domine...*" exclaims St. Thomas Aquinas in the hymn *Adoro te devote*. The mystery of the incarnation of the Word continues in his *Eucharistic Body*, in making himself bread for humanity. Jesus foretold it in the discourse at Capernaum: "*I am the bread which came down from heaven...*" (*Jn* 6:41). His Flesh is real food, his Blood is real drink (cf. *Jn* 6:55). Ecclesial communion and the Communion of Saints are nourished in Eucharistic communion; indeed "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body" (*1 Cor* 10:17).

41. The Eucharist is the Paschal meal of the Sacrificial Lamb, Christ the Lord. Full participation of the faithful at Holy Mass is accomplished in Holy Communion, received with proper internal and external dispositions.^[149] Consequently, just as people should not stay away from communion for a prolonged period of time because of an excessive scrupulosity, by the same token, people should not receive communion in a casual, routine manner.

As seen in the very words of institution: "poured out...for the forgiveness of sins" (*Mt* 26:28) and in the ancient anaphora,^[150] grave sin excludes a person from receiving communion. From her earliest days, the Church required a course for catechumens and penitents; the latter being able to participate at Mass as *Akoinônetôi* (without receiving communion). Grave sins required a canonical penance. The insistence by

many Church Fathers on the necessity of a *worthy* reception of communion proves that the call for the forgiveness of sins, even in the epiclesis after the consecration, is not an invitation addressed to those guilty of grave sin to approach the Eucharist without the foreseen penitence. Even though a person can truly participate at Mass without receiving communion, the integrating but non essential^[151] part of the sacrifice, full participation in the Body of Christ should only be done by those who are properly disposed.^[152]

42. Personal preparation is perfected in the communion rites:

– the *Our Father* contains an appeal for daily bread, which is also the Eucharistic bread, and for “the purification from sin..., so that the *Holy Gifts* might truly be given to the holy.”^[153] In asking for forgiveness, we also seek how to forgive, so that the Kingdom and the will of God might be fulfilled in us and we be made worthy to receive the Sacrament.

– the *Rite of Peace*: the kiss of peace, that is, of pardon, is done in the Eastern Churches and the Ambrosian rite before the anaphora and in the Roman rite before communion. The risen Lord appeared in the midst of his disciples, offered them his peace and prepared, according to St. John Chrysostom, “the table of peace.”^[154] The peace and salvation of souls given in the Eucharist is Christ himself (cf. *Eph* 2:13-17). He was sacrificed to bring peace to all heavenly and earthly realities and to make possible living in peace with others.^[155] Consequently, the Eucharist is the bond of peace (cf. *Eph* 4:3): “Just as peace makes one out of many, so discord makes many out of one.”^[156] “Peace...is the Church of Christ.”^[157] In asking for peace, the Christian is really asking for Christ: “he who seeks peace seeks Christ, since he is our peace.”^[158] The liturgy is the mystery which again brings the peace of Christ to all creation.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* describe the procedure for the kiss of peace in the following manner: “The members of the clergy greet the bishop, and among the laity, men greet men and women women.”^[159] The kiss of the faithful is a sacred action, an experience uniting the faithful among themselves and with the Word.^[160] Peace is implored with a prayer asking for the unity of the Church and of all humankind. Peace expresses mutual love in a brief dialogue between the priest and faithful. The kiss of peace is not obligatory; it is done as opportunity presents itself.^[161] In these cases, according to the simple style of the Roman liturgy and the rich style of the Byzantine rite, each exchanges greetings with those nearby, without leaving one’s place and creating a distraction. During the rite, a certain discipline would be opportune to ensure proper decorum in the liturgy.

The first Christians gave the name “peace” to the Eucharist, because it means *to gather*, to overcome barriers and to unify people in a new way. By coming together at the Eucharist and forgiving each other before going to communion, Christians create conditions for peace in a world without peace.

– *The breaking of bread*: the rite means that, though many, we become one body by receiving the bread which is broken. St. John Chrysostom says: “What Christ did not suffer on the cross he suffers in the oblation for your sake; he accepts being broken so that all might be filled.”^[162] Though Christ be broken, however, he is not divided. Even after the breaking, each particle of holy bread is the whole Christ.^[163] All those who approach communion receive the whole Christ, who fills them entirely. No community can receive Christ without receiving him with the whole Church.

– *The mingling of the sacred species*: in the Roman rite, this is a simple action but one of great significance, exalting the work of the Spirit from the Lord’s incarnation to his resurrection. The Byzantine liturgy explains it as “the fullness of the Holy Spirit.” In the particular rite of *Zéon*, the action is that of pouring hot water into the chalice, using the words: “the fullness of the Holy Spirit.” Now Christ is risen!

– *personal preparation*: The priest prepares himself with prayers recited in a low voice and some moments of silence, in anticipation of the more extended period of silence after communion. His example is to assist the faithful in their preparation.

Holy Communion

43. The priest elevates the consecrated host “as Christ was lifted on the cross,”^[164] and says in the Latin liturgy: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper;” and in the Byzantine rite: “Holy Things for the Holy.” Likewise, “Since communion is not given indifferently to all, the priest does not extend the invitation to everyone... He invites to communion those who can participate worthily: ‘*holy things for the holy*’... He calls ‘holy’ those who are perfect in virtue and also those working towards a perfection not yet attained. For those who participate in the sacred mysteries, nothing stands in the way of their being made holy.”^[165]

The Eucharist is the Sacrament for those who have been reconciled. The Lord offers it to those who have become one with him. Therefore, from the very beginning, *discernment* precedes the Eucharist (cf. *1 Cor* 11:27ff) under pain of sacrilege.^[166] The *Didache* takes up this apostolic tradition and speaks the following words to the priest, before he distributes the Sacrament: “If one is holy, come; if one is not, repent.”^[167] The Byzantine liturgy retains this invitation. In the Roman liturgy, the priest makes the invitation to communion and recites with the faithful a phrase from the Gospel, “*Lord, I am not worthy,*” to express sentiments of humility.^[168] Each person who receives communion responds, “*Amen.*”

44. Ancient sources indicate that communion was not taken but received, an act symbolizing the Sacrament’s meaning, that is, a Gift received with adoration. In the Latin rite, where provision is made for communion under two species, Catholic teaching is to be followed.^[169] In the rites of the Eastern Churches the tradition established in the canons is to be observed.^[170]

True devotion is called for in approaching the altar to receive Holy Communion. St. Francis burned “with love in every fibre of his being towards the Sacrament of the Body of the Lord and was overcome with inexpressible wonder at such a benevolent outpouring and unbounded charity. He received communion often and so devoutly as to render others devout.”^[171] Cabasilas offers the reflection that “when we receive the flesh and blood attached to Christ’s human nature, we receive the spirit of God: the body of God no less than that of man, the blood and soul of God, the mind and will of God, no less than those of man.”^[172] The reality of the Body of Christ is his person and life, a mystery and salvific truth to embrace, as St. Thomas Aquinas states, with faith and reason.

In conclusion, the prayer after communion asks that the mystery celebrated and received be fruitful, since this is the purpose of Holy Mass.^[173]

CHAPTER V

THE EUCHARISTIC MYSTAGOGY FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

The Church Fathers

45. The Lord promised: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (*Mt* 28:20). We do not make him present by ourselves; it is he who makes himself present among us and remains with us always. Access to the mystery of his abiding presence comes through instructing the faithful in a catechesis for catechumens, intimately joined to the liturgy, and *mystagogy* or post-baptismal catechesis for the initiated.^[174]

Christian initiation took an ordered theological-liturgical form at the beginning of the 5th century in catechetical homilies. The Alexandrine Fathers, from Origen to Pseudo-Dionysius, proposed an allegorical mystagogy. They looked upon the liturgy, much like Scripture, as the path which allowed a person to pass from the letter to the spirit, from the mystery visible in sacramental signs to the mystery unseen. The liturgy followed the biblical narration and proposed a moral, personal eschatology as the path from this life to God.

The mystagogy of the Antiochene Fathers, especially St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, took the liturgy and described the historical and mystical events of salvation in a *typological manner*. For them, the sacraments reproduce the salvific actions of Jesus' life in imitating them (*mimesis*) or calling them to mind (*anamnesis*). The sacraments also anticipate the final liturgy, making it contemporary through the presence of the risen Lord among those who are gathered for worship.

The Denial of Mystery Today

46. In some parts of the world the sense of mystery remains strong, while in others there are signs of a widespread mentality which, though not formally denying the mystery of God, excludes the possibility of knowing him through reason and freely adhering to him. A kind of neo-paganism is pushing people to take flight from reality and seek refuge in myths and in idols which bring momentary relief in life. At the same time, a need for spirituality is also manifested.^[175] Moreover, increasing gnostic tendencies are leading people to seek the meaning of everyday happenings from a select few who claim a privy knowledge.

The Church desires to assist humanity in rediscovering the mystery hidden for centuries and manifested in Jesus Christ (cf. *Eph* 3:5-6). Since mystagogy means a method of leading a person to mystery, it is understandable that liturgical formation be accompanied by personal conversion.

Mystagogy Today

47. The Lord walked with his people. He always accompanied the mission of the Church with his presence which transforms us and makes us enter into the final age (*éschaton*). Mystagogy begins with a *faith-encounter* with the Lord through his grace. The custom of the Eastern Churches of giving Holy Communion to children at Baptism and Confirmation shows that the grace of the Eucharist comes before any human act. How could mystagogy take place without the attraction of Jesus? The Gospel refers to Jesus' encounters with men and women of various conditions of life. A personal encounter with Christ initiates an itinerary of knowledge which develops into a faith-experience: "where are you staying? ... and they stayed with him" (*Jn* 1:38-39). Thus it happens that some followed him. This is the mystagogy of God towards humanity; he begins by taking our flesh and redeeming it.

Mystagogy today must avoid an exaggerated use of symbolism which, often unintelligible and abstract, leads to a lengthy, drawn-out commentary. Instead, mystagogy is to be entrusted to the power of the Spirit who is communicated through the simplicity of words and sacramental actions. The mission of the Holy Spirit makes intelligible what Jesus Christ has revealed. He is the unseen mystagogue. According to St. Basil the Great, though each person of the Trinity does something individually, it remains the work of all three.^[176]

Consequently, rediscovering the methodology of the Church Fathers is important in responding to the contemporary visual need for images and symbols. The contribution of mediaeval theologians is useful in responding to the rational needs of adhering to mystery. This patrimony is conserved in prayers and liturgical rites. Participation in the Eucharistic mystery greatly depends on understanding them.^[177] Catechesis should also help priests and the faithful understand and put into effect the various aspects concerning the celebration of the Eucharist.^[178]

Presiding at the Eucharist

48. The mystagogical method is to read the mystery of Christ in the rites and to contemplate the underlying, unseen reality. The mystagogue in the liturgy, then, does not speak in his own name; he echoes to the Church what he has received and what has been entrusted to him. The liturgy cannot be treated by the celebrant or the community as "private property."^[179]

St. John the Baptist is the most emblematic figure of the minister who makes himself small so that the Lord may increase. This is the basis of the sacred power, *exousía* in the Holy Spirit, entrusted by Christ to the

Church, the priesthood of Christ in which his ministers participate. St. Cyril of Jerusalem recalls that the word *ecclesia* appears for the first time in the passage in which Aaron is assigned the priestly ministry. The priesthood and the Church are born at the same time and are inseparable parts of each other.^[180] The Roman Canon states: “Accept this offering from us your ministers and from your whole family.” As for the different roles in the Body, at Mass the priest fulfills the role of *Christ the Head*, while the faithful exercise the role of *Christ’s members*. The priest acts *in persona Christi*, in that it is no longer he who acts but Christ acts in him (cf. *Gal 2:20*).

49. The Eucharist extends its efficacy to all the minister’s actions, since the priestly function does not only include sanctification but also shepherding and teaching. This is true of the bishop’s ministry, when he celebrates the Eucharist. In addition, he manifests “with major clarity”^[181] *the fullness* of the Church as the sacrament of unity. The same truth underlies the ministry of the priest “when he celebrates... the Eucharist with dignity and humility.”^[182] It is also the model of the role of deacon, the ministers—particularly the acolyte and extraordinary minister of the Eucharist—and the faithful who ought “to offer themselves....” with a deep sense of religion and charity towards everyone.^[183]

Dignity at Eucharistic Celebrations

50. Mystagogy presupposes a certain dignity at celebrations. The Roman liturgy, in its simplicity, desires that “...the sacred places and things might indeed be worthy, beautiful, signs and symbols of the heavenly realities.”^[184] The mystery is set in “the spirit and expression of deep reverence and adoration in which the liturgy is carried out.”^[185] For this reason, Pope John Paul II, speaking of dignity at the Eucharistic celebration, has called for the strict observance of the Church’s liturgical norms and their external expressions.^[186] The Latin word *ordo*, used in the liturgical rites, comes from the apostolic precept of St. Paul (cf. *1 Cor 14:40*) which states that everything in the liturgical assembly might be done properly and in hierarchical order.^[187] According to the profound spirit of the liturgy, this begins in the priest’s “putting on a particular vestment to accomplish a sacred act, signifying his leaving the usual dimensions of daily life to enter the presence of God in the celebration of the divine Mysteries...”^[188] The norms on sacred vessels also respond to this need. Everything contributes to the sense of mystery. St. Francis set down for his friars that the chalices, vessels and linens for the Eucharist have a particular dignity and be treated with the highest respect and veneration.^[189]

The Dignity of Chant and Sacred Music

51. Chant and music ought to be worthy of the mystery which is celebrated, as seen in the psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles of Sacred Scripture (cf. *Col 3:16*). Therefore, from the first centuries, the Church has considered sacred music as an integrating part of the Liturgy. While embracing various musical forms, the Church’s Magisterium has constantly emphasised that “various forms of music be consistent with the spirit of the Sacred Liturgy,”^[190] so as to avoid the risk that divine worship might be adversely affected by unsuitable profane elements.

The Encounter with Mystery through Art

52. God’s encounter with humanity in search of salvation took place in the incarnation of the Word, which rendered God visible (cf. *Jn 14:9*). In its turn, because of Christ’s Paschal mystery, humanity is co-involved in a process of ascending to God, necessarily passing through the cross, and consequently, through human reality (cf. *Col 1:15-20*). The celebration of these mysteries finds a vivid analogy in “the most noble expression of human genius,” among which are rightly numbered the liberal arts, particularly religious art, which, like the liturgy, leads the spirit to contemplation through the experience of the senses, and therefore, is specially equipped in “fully turning people’s minds to God.”^[191]

These expressions of faith, therefore, in a rich, artistic patrimony cannot be overlooked in the life of the Church. For this reason, “architecture, sculpture, painting and music, moved by the Christian mystery, have

found in the Eucharist, both directly and indirectly, a source of great inspiration”^[192] In this way, splendid architectural works have been constructed as sacred space for the celebration of the Eucharist; magnificent works of art have been done out of reverence for the altar in the West and the iconostasis in the East; and precious, sacred vessels have been created to enhance the dignity of the liturgical service.

The Orientation of Prayer

53. The cosmic conception of salvation which “is visited from on high” (*Lk* 1:78), inspired the apostolic tradition of orientating Christian buildings and the altar towards the East, so as to celebrate the Eucharist facing the Lord, a custom still followed in the Eastern Churches. “It is not a question, as is often claimed, of presiding at the celebration with the back turned to the people, but rather of guiding the people in pilgrimage towards the Kingdom, invoked in prayer until the return of the Lord.”^[193]

In the Roman rite, the separate locations of the ambo and altar provide a natural variation in focus and attention for the liturgical actions done in these places. The same is true in Eucharistic worship outside of Mass; the faithful, upon entering the Church, turn their eyes towards the monstrance, where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

The Sacred Area for the Clergy or Sanctuary

54. New Testament tradition, a prolongation of the Jewish liturgy in the Temple, separated the area of the faithful, catechumens and penitents from the *sanctuary*, the holy place of God (cf. *Gen* 28:17; 3:5), where the ministers fulfilled their service to the divine mysteries. It is a sacred space for divine worship, which “ought to be distinguishable”^[194] in the Eastern Churches as well as the Latin Church.

The Altar, the Table of the Lord

55. The biblical and patristic image of heaven descending to earth is manifested in the Eucharist celebrated on the altar.

The altar, though not necessarily large, is to be proportionate to the sanctuary. The priest approaches the altar for the offertory rites; in concelebrated Masses the priests gather around the altar for the anaphora.^[195] To express reverence for the altar as a symbol of Jesus Christ, the living stone (*I Pt* 2:4), a fixed altar is specially recommended in every Church.^[196] For the same reason, the altar is also ornate and covered with at least one cloth of noble quality.^[197]

56. The altar is the symbol of Christ, Calvary and the Tomb from which the Lord rose in glory.^[198] It is the table^[199] on which the Lamb of God is prepared. Communion is distributed to the faithful outside the sanctuary. Consequently, the altar is venerated and incensed together with the book of the Gospels placed upon it.^[200] The Catechism states: “The altar, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord. This is all the more so, since the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven, who is giving himself to us. ‘For what is the altar of Christ if not the image of the Body of Christ?’ asks St. Ambrose. He says elsewhere ‘The altar represents the Body (of Christ) and the Body of Christ is on the altar.’”^[201]

The Tabernacle, the Tent of Presence

57. Adoration is not to be seen in opposition to communion, nor is it to be placed on the same level. Communion reaches to the depths of a person when it is sustained by adoration. There is no conflict of signs between the tabernacle and the altar of Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic presence is not bound by time nor limited to the Mass. It is a mystery which is to endure throughout history until the Second Coming of the Lord in glory.

The Eastern Churches, which do not have the practice of Eucharistic adoration, often conserve the *artofòrio* on the altar, that is, they reserve the Holy Gifts for the infirm and those who are absent. The book of the Gospels is also placed on the altar.

58. The necessary correspondence between the altar, tabernacle and chair is due to the preeminence of the Lord in relation to his minister. The centrality of the tabernacle and the cross ought not to be compromised by the chair of the celebrant, which liturgical norms dictate should “avoid every form of throne.”^[202] If the tabernacle is on the central altar, it is better that the chair not be located in front of it, since the celebrant is to have and display humility. If the altar is in the centre of the sanctuary and the chair is placed behind it, a meaningful and functional solution is needed to foster “communication between the priest and the assembly.”^[203]

In conclusion, it is well to recall that, in both the West and East, “the arrangements of the places, images, liturgical vestments and sacred vessels are not left to each one’s taste, but ought to correspond to the intrinsic needs of the celebration and are to be coherent with them.”^[204]

CHAPTER VI

THE EUCHARIST: A GIFT TO BE ADORED

The Spirit of the Liturgy is Adoration

59. St. Cyril of Jerusalem states: “After you have received the Body of Christ, go also to the chalice of his Blood, not extending your hands, but bowing and saying ‘Amen’ with an attitude of adoration and reverence.”^[205] It is possible to say that sacramental communion leads to adoration, which is expressed in a profound bow of the body and spirit. The principal signs of adoration, prevalent among Catholics and practised in common with Orthodox Christians, are bowing (*proskýnesis*) and genuflecting (*gonyklisía*). Just as standing is associated with the resurrection, prostration signifies adoration of the Living One, risen from the dead. In the New Testament, in the liturgy recorded in the Book of Revelation, the word *proskýnesis* is repeatedly used. This heavenly liturgy is presented to the Church as the model and standard for the earthly liturgy. The acts of adoration, called for in this liturgy, acknowledge the Lord’s majesty and humanity’s belonging to God.

Kneeling and standing are two parts of a single act of adoration done during the Eucharistic Prayer and communion. True adoration is conscious of the mystery present and knows that the Mass is more than a simple meal of fellowship. The spirit of the Christian liturgy needs better to take into account: communion with Christ, adoration of God and the offering of everything to him—history, the cosmos and ourselves.

Communion and Adoration are Inseparable

60. Receiving communion means to enter into communion with the Lord and the saints of the Church, both in heaven and on earth. Thus, communion and contemplation follow each other. We cannot receive sacramental communion, without making it personal: “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (*Rev.* 3:20). This is also the profound truth of Eucharistic piety.

For the Catholic Church, this attitude of adoration is reserved for not only the celebration of the Eucharist but also its worship outside of Mass; it is the Sacrament of “infinite value,” intended for the “sacramental and spiritual communion” of the faithful.^[206] In the Byzantine liturgy, the hymn accompanying the communion rite is “We have seen the light,” because to contemplate the Eucharist is not presumptuous, but to receive it without discernment is (cf. *1 Cor* 11:28). In the Latin Church, the entire content of the faith passed down for two millennia needs to be guarded and strengthened.^[207]

Adoration of the Eucharist begins in communion and leads to acts of Eucharistic piety, adoring God the Father, in Spirit and in Truth, in the risen and living Christ, truly present among us.

The Sense of Mystery and Attitudes Which Express It

61. The sacred is a sign of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil the Great states: “Everything with a sacred character derives it from him.”^[208] In the process of the world’s loss of a sense of the sacred, many think that the line between the sacred and profane no longer exists. However, God does not retreat from the world to leave it to its worldly designs. Though God is not yet “everything to everyone” (*I Cor 15:28*), the distinction between the sacred and profane will remain until the world is transformed.

The sacred aspect of the Eucharist can be seen in the preparatory prayer of the priest for Mass and communion, in his prayers of thanksgiving after Mass and communion, in silence,^[209] in acts of purification,^[210] in incensations,^[211] in genuflections and in bows.^[212] These actions lead to a more intimate participation.^[213] Though the Sacrament involves a human dimension, we participate in an action which is not our own; Jesus is the Word and then he becomes Flesh. The liturgical action is truly an action of God himself. This consciousness gives the Christian liturgy its newness and special character; God himself acts and fulfills the essential part. Without the awareness of being made participants, the understanding called for in the celebration of the liturgy remains only exterior.

The Eucharist: *Sacramentum Pietatis*

62. In the liturgy we *celebrate* the risen Christ. For the Christian, this is the meaning of celebration, particularly *Sunday* celebration. The Church’s expressions of piety, especially those of Eucharistic worship outside of Mass, have a fundamental link to the Eucharistic liturgy and require attentive discernment.

In the liturgy, the inculturation of the faith takes place in a special way. It can be said that inculturation first took place in the incarnation, when the Word assumed a human nature and used human words to express himself in a specific time, place and culture. The Second Vatican Council has recalled that the incarnation is the basis for bringing the Gospel, the liturgy and Christian doctrine to local cultures in order to benefit its recipients, especially the poor and simple-hearted.

63. *Popular piety* brings together great geographic areas into the unity of faith and spans various cultures. Though distinct from the liturgy, it can be considered as an expression naturally flowing from the liturgy. The liturgy provides the context for traditional and new forms of Eucharistic adoration, such as Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Eucharistic Processions, Holy Hours, Forty Hours Devotion, Perpetual Adoration and Eucharistic Congresses.^[214]

Liturgy as well as popular piety are an expression of the faith and the life of the Christian people. In the process of inculturating Christianity in non-Christian cultures, care and concern needs to be given to the culture and popular religious traditions which have flowered within Christianity. The same Holy Spirit sustains in the faith not only the liturgy but also popular piety.

64. Elements of Eucharistic spirituality are seen in the worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass, which is “directed towards communion, both sacramental and spiritual.... The Eucharist is a priceless treasure: by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass, we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace.”^[215] Contemplation and adoration intensify a person’s desire for total union with the Lord and Creator. At the same time, they make us conscious of our unworthiness. The Holy Father also mentions the practice of “spiritual communion,” recommended by the masters of the spiritual life for those unable to receive communion sacramentally.^[216]

Outside the Mass, the Lord Jesus is also living, spiritual food. He is the unfathomable mystery of God-among-us, accompanying us on our way.

CHAPTER VII

THE EUCHARIST: A GIFT FOR MISSION

The Sanctification and *Divinization* of Humanity

65. The Eucharist's meaning *for the person* is put in relief, so to speak, by St. Cyril of Jerusalem who remarks that through the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ a person becomes "one body (*syssomos*) and one blood (*synaimos*) with him."^[217] St. John Chrysostom imagines Christ speaking to him in the following manner: "I have again descended to earth, not simply to be present among you but to embrace you. I leave myself as food for you and I allow myself to be assimilated until our oneness and togetherness are truly perfect. Persons united together maintain their individuality, but I become totally one with you. In the end, I do not want anything to come between us; this only I desire: to be one with you."^[218] On this basis, the body of the believer becomes the temple of the Trinitarian God: "he has Christ living in him, together with his Father and the Paraclete."^[219] During communion, the Divine Byzantine Liturgy sings the hymn: "We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith, and we adore the undivided Trinity as it has saved us."

Communion, then, has an ontological effect; it is union with the life of Christ who transforms the life of each person. This establishes a vital identification which perfects and fulfills the filial adoption of Baptism.

66. Another aspect of the Eucharist's sacramental grace is its being the *antidote* which liberates^[220] and preserves from sin.^[221] The Eucharist strengthens the Christian's supernatural life and is a defence against the loss of the theological virtues. It is a sacrament of the living, that is, for those who enjoy union with Christ and his Church. Mortal sin causes separation from God and the Church, thus barring access to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the antidote, the salutary medicine for healing the wounds of sin, because God's mercy is symbolised and realised in this sacrament: "The Lord, lover of humanity, immediately saw what happened and the gravity of the wound. He hurried towards curing the injury so that it would not grow larger and become incurable...Moved by his goodness, he did not stop for a moment in providing for humanity."^[222]

The Eucharist, therefore, is a gift which involves each one in a personal way; the sacrament's personal character finds confirmation in the apostolate.

The Eucharist: *Vinculum Charitatis*

67. The primary effect of the Eucharist is the truth of the Body and Blood present in the Sacrament. Pope Innocent III expresses it in the following manner in a letter, "the form is bread and wine, the truth is the Body and Blood and the power is unity and charity."^[223] St. Thomas Aquinas confirms such a truth saying that the Sacrament's immediate effect is the *real Body* of Christ,^[224] immolated and living, present in the Sacrament. This presence in the substances is real for those who participate in a particular time and place. At work in them is the transformation which is the pledge of the heavenly banquet. The Second Vatican Council recalls that "in any community existing around the altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is manifested a symbol of charity and 'unity of the Mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation' (*Summa Theologica*, 3, 73, 3.)"^[225]

Union *with* Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, the Church, is the principal fruit of the Eucharist and its meaning.

Belonging to Christ and incorporation into the Church is the immediate, particular effect of Baptism (cf. *Rm* 6:1-11); it is perfected in the Eucharist. Indeed, precisely by becoming a member of the Body of Christ in Baptism can the believer participate in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, then, presupposes ecclesial communion

received in Baptism.^[226] In the Eucharist the baptismal priesthood is exercised and the vital relationship with Christ grows (cf. *Jn* 6: 55-57). Undeniably connected to these is the unity of the faithful who bear witness to mutual charity as members of the same body, a much-needed unity so that the world might believe (cf. *Jn* 10:9-17; 15: 1-11; 17: 20-23). In the Eucharist, Christ presses us towards charity, inside and outside the Church.

The Medicine of Body and Spirit

68. The Eucharist, especially in time of sickness or at the moment of death, is called *viaticum* for eternal life. With it comes the pledge of future glory, of seeing God as he is. The Council of Trent followed the patristic tradition of calling the Eucharist the “*medicine of immortality*” for humanity and made the invitation to eat it until the Lord returns in glory, when, according to his promise (cf. *Jn* 6:54), the ultimate effect of the Eucharist will be fulfilled: the resurrection of the body.^[227]

The Eucharist is the banquet to conquer death^[228] and with it “we digest, as it were, the ‘secret’ of the resurrection”^[229] so as to live forever. *Eternal life* is not quantitative, nor simply time without end, but a different level of existence. St. John makes the distinction between *bios*, “transitory life in this world”, and *zoé*, “true life” which enters into us in the encounter with the Lord. This is the meaning of his promise: “he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life...(and) has passed from death to life” (*Jn* 5:24), “I *am* the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (*Jn* 11:25). Because of this *eschatological* meaning of the Eucharist, we await the final resurrection, when God will be “everything to everyone” (*1 Cor* 15:28).

69. Christianity does not only promise immortality to the soul but resurrection to the body, namely, the whole human person. The Eucharist’s transforming grace affects every *anthropological* element, extending its influence to the existential aspects of each person, like freedom and the meaning of life, suffering and death. If these fundamental questions of life do not receive a response, how difficult would it be to have faith in this Sacrament as the instrument of salvation and the means of personal transformation in Christ.

The Social Meaning of the Eucharist

70. Feeding on the Eucharist, Christians nourish their soul and become the soul which sustains the world,^[230] thus giving a Christian meaning to life,^[231] which is the meaning of the Sacrament. The Sacrament brings the gift of charity and solidarity, because the Sacrament of the Altar is inseparable from the new commandment of mutual love.

The Eucharist is the power that transforms us^[232] and strengthens us in virtue. “It spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us”^[233] in the family, at work and in society. From this social character of the Eucharist, each person’s mission in the Church receives its power and trust.

71. From the beginning of the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch defined Christians as those who “live according to Sunday,”^[234] with faith in the Lord’s resurrection and his presence in the Eucharistic celebration.^[235] St. Justin emphasized a practical urgency at the conclusion of the Sunday Eucharist: “And they who are well-to-do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is placed with the presider, who assists orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, as well as those who are in prison and the strangers sojourning among us, and, in a word, takes care of all who are in need.”^[236]

The Eucharist is the basis for the *missio ad gentes* and the means to bring it to perfection.^[237] From the Eucharist comes the duty of every Christian to cooperate in making the ecclesial body grow.^[238] Indeed, missionary activity “by the preaching of the word and by the celebration of the sacraments, whose centre and summit is the Most Holy Eucharist, brings about the presence of Christ, the author of salvation.”^[239] The

missionary mandate quite often entails martyrdom which to our very day is suffered by pastors and the faithful precisely during the celebration of the Eucharist. It allows the salvation given in the Sacrament of Bread and Wine to reach multitudes of people.

Consequently, Holy Communion brings its fruits: growth in union with Christ, separation from sin, a strengthening of ecclesial communion, a commitment towards the poor, the increase of grace and the pledge of eternal life.^[240]

CONCLUSION

72. The Lord Jesus instituted the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Communion and Revelation of the Father. Our Lady was the first to follow this method: “In a certain sense, Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the incarnation of God’s Word*....As a result, there is a *profound analogy* between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the Amen which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived ‘through the Holy Spirit’ was the ‘Son of God’ (Lk 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin’s faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.”^[241]

On the first Easter, the Lord Jesus, together with his disciples, accomplished the new, definitive exodus out of the condition of slavery to sin. There is no longer the blood of a lamb; now, bread and wine distributed to all become the Body and Blood of the true Lamb of God. Thus, the new covenant is realized.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church takes up the words of St. Irenaeus: “our way of thinking conforms to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.”^[242]

73. Faith finds its strength and dynamism in the Sacrament of the Real Presence, because truly the *lex orandi* remains linked to the *lex credendi* which, in turn, is translated into the *lex agendi* of the Church’s life and mission. The Eucharist, then, has also a personal dynamism: it is the gift to celebrate, bringing a deeper knowledge of the mystery of salvation, accomplishing communion, leading to adoration, and finally affecting the Church’s life through mission and pastoral ministry, all the while fostering charity inside and outside the Church.

By its nature, the Eucharist is inseparably bound to the Church’s marks of unity, holiness, apostolicity and catholicity,^[243] professed in the Creed. Thus, the life and mission of Christian communities in the world conserve their proper ecclesial character, when they guard it and foster the entire richness of those gifts. The topic of the Synod indicates that the Church lives through the Eucharist, in that she receives from the Eucharist as from a font the divine life which comes from above, and in her mission tends towards it as the summit of her mystery of communion: “The Eucharist thus appears as both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.”^[244]

QUESTIONS

1. ***The Eucharist in the Life of the Church:*** What importance does the celebration of the Eucharist have in the life of your community and that of the individual believer? What is the frequency of participation at Mass on Sundays? On weekdays? On the major feast days of the liturgical year? Could you supply statistics—even approximate—in this regard?

2. ***Eucharistic Doctrine and Formation:*** What attempts are being made to transmit the teaching on the Eucharist, whole and entire, to your community and the individual believer? Specifically, how are [*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), nn. 1322-1419, and the Encyclical Letter [*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*](#) being utilized by priests, deacons, consecrated persons and the laity involved in pastoral work? In what way is the formation of faith in the Eucharist being ensured in initial catechesis? In homilies? In the programs of ongoing formation for priests, permanent deacons, and seminarians? Of consecrated persons? Of the laity?

3. ***The Understanding of the Eucharistic Mystery:*** What is the prevailing idea on the Eucharist among priests and the faithful of your community: sacrifice?, memorial of the Paschal Mystery?, the precept of Sunday Mass?, fraternal meal?, act of adoration? Other...? Practically speaking, is any one of these ideas prevalent? If so, what is the reason.

4. ***The Shadows in the Celebration of the Eucharist:*** In the Encyclical Letter [*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*](#) (n. 10) the Holy Father mentions “shadows” in the celebration of the Eucharist. What are the negative aspects (abuses, misunderstandings) existing in Eucharistic worship? What elements or actions done in practice can obscure the profound sense of the Eucharistic mystery? What is the cause of such a disorienting situation for the faithful?

5. ***The Eucharistic Celebration and Liturgical Norms:*** In an attempt to be personal and avant-garde, do priests manifest any attitudes in their celebration of Mass which are explicitly or implicitly contrary to the liturgical norms established by the Catholic Church (cf. *The General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, Chapter IV; *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*)? In your estimation, what are the underlying reasons for such behaviour? What elements or actions during the celebration of Holy Mass, and also in Eucharistic worship outside of Mass, according to their respective norms and dispositions, should receive attention so as to highlight the profound sense of this great Mystery of the faith hidden in the gift of the Eucharist?

6. ***The Sacrament of the Eucharist and The Sacrament of Penance:*** Conversion is necessary to participate fully in partaking of the Eucharist. What is the faithful’s understanding of the relationship between the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Eucharist? Holy Mass is also the celebration of salvation from sin and death. For the return of sinners, above all on Sundays, what is provided so that the faithful can celebrate the Sacrament of Penance in time to participate in the Eucharist? Do Christian communities often display a casual approach to receiving Holy Communion or do they unjustifiably refrain from receiving it? What is being done to assist the faithful to discern if they have the proper dispositions to approach this great Sacrament?

7. ***The Sacred Character of the Eucharist:*** The Eucharist is the mystery of the Real Presence of God-among-us; at the same time, it is an unfathomable mystery. How should its sacred character be acknowledged? How do priests and the faithful manifest this sacred character in their celebration of Holy Mass on Sundays, weekdays, and major feast days and at other liturgical times during the year? What cultural attitudes and practices obscure this sacred character?

8. ***Holy Mass and the Celebration of the Word:*** In parishes awaiting a priest, how widespread is the practice of celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with the distribution of the Eucharist, over which a lay person or Eucharistic minister often presides? What specific formation do those responsible receive? Are the faithful able to understand the difference between such celebrations and Holy Mass? Do they have an adequate knowledge of the distinction between an ordained and non-ordained minister?

9. ***The Eucharist and the Other Sacraments:*** To what measure and with what criteria are the other sacraments celebrated during Holy Mass? When the sacraments and sacramentals are celebrated during Holy Mass (Matrimony, Funerals, Baptisms, etc.) with non-practising Catholics, non-Catholics and unbelievers present, what steps are taken to avoid a casual attitude or even carelessness towards the Eucharist?

10. ***The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist:*** Have the faithful in your parishes preserved faith in the Lord's Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist? Do they have a clear understanding of the gift of the Lord's Real Presence? Do situations exist in Eucharistic Liturgies or the Worship of the Eucharist which might lead to a diminished regard for the Real Presence. If so, what might be the reasons?

11. ***Eucharistic Devotion:*** Does the Worship of the Most Blessed Sacrament have a due place in parish life and communities? What importance do pastors give to adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament? To Perpetual Adoration? To Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament? To personal prayer before the tabernacle? To processions on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ? To Eucharistic devotion in parish missions?

12. ***Holy Mass and the Liturgical-Devotional Life:*** Do the faithful understand the difference between Holy Mass and other devotional practices like the Liturgy of the Hours, the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals outside of Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, processions, etc.? How is the substantial difference shown between Eucharistic celebration and other liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations?

13. ***Dignity at Eucharistic Celebrations:*** Is attention given in your Churches to the liturgical environment for Eucharistic celebrations? What is the artistic-architectural setting in which the Eucharistic liturgy is celebrated both on solemn occasions and on weekdays? Do the surroundings give a clear indication that the Eucharistic banquet is truly a "sacred" banquet ([Ecclesia De Eucharistia](#), 48)? How frequently and for what pastoral reasons is Mass celebrated outside of this place of worship?

14. ***The Eucharist and Inculturation:*** To what measure must attention be given to inculturation in the celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist so as to avoid a misunderstood creativity which leads to peculiar and strange practices. What criteria are followed in inculturation? In the Latin Church, are the norms proposed in the Instruction *De Liturgia Romana et Inculturazione* given adequate consideration? What is the experience of the Eastern Churches in the inculturation of the Eucharist?

15. ***The Eschatological Aspect of the Eucharist:*** Is the eschatological aspect of the Eucharist given sufficient emphasis in catechesis, in ongoing formation, in homiletics and in liturgical celebration? In what way is the eschatological tension flowing from the Eucharist present in pastoral life? How does the celebration of Mass manifest "the Communion of Saints," a foretaste of the eschatological reality?

16. ***The Eucharist, Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and the Sects:*** Considering the ideas on the Eucharist held by our separated brothers and sisters in the West and the challenges of other religions and the sects, how is the mystery of the Most Blessed Sacrament preserved and presented in its entirety, so as not to cause confusion or misunderstanding among the faithful, particularly at ecumenical and interreligious meetings?

17. ***The Eucharist and Ecclesial "Intercommunion":*** "The celebration of the Eucharist cannot be the starting-point for communion" ([Ecclesia De Eucharistia](#), 35). How are the norms of intercommunion applied (cf. [The Code of Canon Law](#), canon 844)? Are the faithful aware of the norm that a Catholic cannot receive the Eucharist in communities which do not have the Sacrament of Orders (cf. [Ecclesia De Eucharistia](#), 46)?

18. ***The Eucharist and the Moral Life:*** The Eucharist provides growth in the moral life of the Christian. What do the faithful believe about the necessity of sacramental grace for living according to the Spirit and becoming saints? What do the faithful think about the relation between the reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and other aspects of the Christian life: personal sanctification, moral obligations, fraternal charity, the construction of an earthly society, etc.?

19. ***The Eucharist and Mission:*** The Eucharist is also a gift for mission. Are the faithful aware that the Sacrament of the Eucharist leads to the mission they have to fulfill in the world, according to their state in life?

20. **More on the Eucharist:** What other aspects of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, not contained in the preceding questions, should be considered in preparing the *Instrumentum laboris* which will be discussed during the synodal assembly?

LEONIS MAGNI, *Sermo 2 de Ascensione*, 61 (74), 2: *SCh* 74bis, 278.

ORIGENIS, *In epistulam ad Romanos*, 4, 2: *PG* 14, 968B.

Cf. CONC. ŒCUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 14 e 48; II CŒTUS EXTRAORDINARIII GENERALIS SYNODI EPISCOPORUM (1985), *Relationem finalem*, II.B.b.1.

Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 13; CONC. ŒCUM. TRIDENTIN., sess. XXII, cap. 6.

Cf. CONC. ŒCUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 10

IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 60: *AAS* 95 (2003), 473.

Cf. ibidem, 35: *AAS* 95 (2003), 457.

CONC. ŒCUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 47.

Ibidem.

Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesiæ, 1322-1419.

Codex Iuris Canonici, c 897-958.

Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium, c 698-717.

Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 9: *AAS* 95 (2003), 438-439.

De Mysteriis, 47: *SCh* 25bis, 182.

IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Redemptor hominis* (4.III.1979), IV, 20: *AAS* 71 (1979), 309-316.

Cf. *Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesiæ*, 1356-1381.

In S.Matthæum, 82, 5: *PG* 58, 744.

Cf. N. CABASILÆ, *Expositio divinæ liturgiæ*, 32, 10: *SCh* 4bis, 205.

Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 2; CONC. ŒCUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 3, 28; Decr. de Presbyterorum ministerio et vita *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2,4,5.

IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 12: *AAS* 95 (2003), 441.

This very beautiful and meaningful expression is used in the Eastern Churches to refer to the "Last Supper" or the "Lord's Supper". The adjective "last" should be understood as indicating Christ's desire to celebrate, according to Jewish custom, the Passover meal for a final time before his death, so as to render it "new and eternal" and to constitute it as a mystical covenant. In this way, the "hermeneutic key" of the Eucharist can be considered, united to the Paschal Mystery, to include not only the Lord's death and resurrection but also his incarnation.

Cf. S. IOANNIS CHRYSOSTOMI, *In S. Matthæum*, 82, 1: PG 58, 737-738.

Cf. N. CABASILÆ, *De vita in Christo*, I, 1: SCh 355, 74.

S. IOANNIS CHRYSOSTOMI, *In epistula I ad Corinthios*, 24, 5: PG 61, 205.

S. GREGORII NISSENI, *Homilia in Ecclesiastem*, III: PG 44, 469.

S. MAXIMI CONFESSORIS, *Mystagogia*, 1: PG 91, 664.

Homilia in Oziam, 6, 4: PG 56, 140.

Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 15: AAS 95 (2003), 442-443.

Cf. CONC. ŒCUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 7, 47; Decr. de Presbyterorum ministerio et vita *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 5,18; *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 3.

Cf., e.g., S. CYRILLI IEROSOLOMITANI, *Catechesin mystagogicam*, IV, 2, 1-3; IV, 7,5-6; V, 22, 5: SCh 126bis, 136. 154. 172.

PAULI VI, Litt. encycl. *Mysterium fidei* (3.IX.1965), 26: AAS 57 (1965), 766.

Cf. *Catechismum Catholicæ Ecclesiæ*, 1328-1332.

Cf. VIII: SCh 11, 79.

Cf. *Ad Ephesios*, 13, 1; *Ad Philadelphienses*, 4; *Ad Smyrnenses*, 7, 1: *Patres Apostolici*, F.X. Funk ed., Tübingen 1992, p. 186; 220; 230.

Cf. *Didachen* 9-10. 14: J.P. Audet ed., Parisiis 1958, 235-236; 240.

Cf. *I Apologiam*, 67, 1-6; 66, 1-4: *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum Secundi Sæculi*, vol. I, pars 1, Wiesbaden 1969, p. 180-182; 184-188.

Cf. *Adversus Hæreses*, 4. 17, 5; 18, 5: SCh 100, 592. 610.

Cf. *Epistulam* 63, 13: PL 4, 383-384.

Cf. *Catechesin magnam*, 37: SCh 453, 315-325.

Cf. *Catechesin mystagogicam*, 4, 3: SCh 126bis, 136.

De Sacerdotio, III, 4: SCh 272, 142-144.

Cf. *Homilias Catecheticas* 15 et 16: R. Tonneau-R.Devresse, ed., ST 145, in Civitate Vaticana 1949, 461-605.

Cf. *De Sacramentis*, 4-5; *De Mysteriis*, 8-9: SCh 25bis, 102-137; 178-193.

Cf. e.g. *Sermonem* 132: PL 38, 743-737.

Cf. *Sermonem* 227, 1: PL 38, 1099-1101.

Cf. *De Civitate Dei*, X, 5-6: PL 41, 281-284.

Cf. *Summam Theologiæ*, III, 73, a.1.

Cf. *ibidem*, 74, a.1; 79, a.1.

Ibidem, 73, a.4.

Cf. *Breviloquium*, VI, 9: *Opera omnia, Opuscoli Teologici / 2*, Romæ 1966, 276.

Sermo 229, A (Guelferbytanus 7), Tractatus de Dominica Sanctæ Paschæ, 1; *PLS 2*, 555; E.D.G. Morin, *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, I, Romæ 1930, 462.

Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 23: *AAS 95* (2003), 448-449.

Cf. *ibidem* 59: *AAS 95* (2003), 472-473.

Ibidem 40: *AAS 95* (2003), 460.

Cf. *ibidem*, 5: *AAS 95* (2003), 436.

Cf. CONC. ŒCUM. VAT. II, Const. dogm. de *Ecclesia Lumen gentium*, 3; IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 21: *AAS 95* (2003), 447.

PAULI VI, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (26.III.1970), 8.

Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 26: *AAS 95* (2003), 451.

Ibidem, 27: *AAS 95* (2003), 451.

Ibidem, 28: *AAS 95* (2003), 451-452.

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