

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE: EUCHARISTIC LIFE AS COMPLETION IN CHRIST

A. The complexity and simplicity of the Eucharist

5 The sacrament of the Eucharist must be considered in its liturgical context: the sacrifice of the Mass. The eucharistic life is the whole of Christian life carried out both as the preparation of the gifts to be offered in the Mass and as the fulfillment of the commission to go forth to love and serve the Lord. The Mass is the regular (daily or weekly) summit of each Catholic's life; for it everything else should prepare and
10 from it everything else should follow.

In the Mass, one participates even now in Christ's glory. Likewise, by integration with the Mass the remainder of one's life even now constitutes an imperfect but nevertheless real beginning of heaven--of one's share in the ultimate fulfillment of everything in Christ. Morally good human acts within a Christian's life are meaningful
15 in many distinct ways beyond their basic human meaning and value, because of the relationship between morality and charity. However, the supreme and integrating meaning of Christian life is its character as eucharistic--that is, as a gift offered to God in thanksgiving for everything He gives to us.

The Eucharist is a complex, many-sided reality. The Council of Trent lists five
20 reasons for the institution by Christ of this most holy sacrament (DS 1638/875). First, the sacrament is for a remembrance of the works of Jesus, to be received to preserve His memory and proclaim His death until He comes (cf. Ps 110.4; 1 Cor 11.24-26). Second, the sacrament is for spiritual food, to sustain and build up those who live with Jesus' life (cf. Mt 26.26; Jn 6.58). Third, the sacrament is to free us from daily defects and
25 to keep us from mortal sin. Fourth, the sacrament is a pledge or downpayment on our future glory and everlasting happiness; by it we begin to be in heaven even during this life. Fifth, the sacrament is a symbol of the one body of which Christ is the head (cf. 1 Cor 11.3; Eph 5.23); the bonds of faith, hope, and charity which unite members to the body are strengthened, as Christ wills, by the worthy celebration of this sacrament.

30 Essentially the same points are formulated compactly by Vatican II at the beginning of its chapter on the Mystery of the Eucharist:

At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Savior 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,
35 and so to entrust to His beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, 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 (SC 47).

The only difference between Trent and Vatican II is that the latter does not explicitly
40 mention the role of the Eucharist in overcoming venial and keeping us from mortal sin; Vatican II covers this with the affirmative indication that "the mind is filled with grace."

In addition to the rich complexity of its purposes, the Eucharist also involves another complexity, which arises because it is a divine-human communion of love. As I
45 explained in chapter eleven, section F, and chapter thirty-two, section B, Jesus unites in His human life the revelatory signs of the Word Incarnate and the human response of the Word Incarnate. The Eucharist primarily--and the other sacraments by relationship to it--make the human life of Jesus present to us, to the extent that this life exists in Him as He now is in glory and is outwardly performed in the sacramental rites. Hence,
50 the Eucharist (and the other sacraments too) must be understood both as a revelatory sign, which communicates divine truth and love to us, and as a human response of sacrifice in thankful response to the great good--namely, Himself--which God shares with us in Jesus.

As I explained in chapter thirteen, section G, the structure of our Mass is the
55 same as the structure of the making of the covenant of Sinai (cf. Ex 24.3-11). The law is read to the people; they respond with an expression of acceptance and commitment; the agreement is sealed in blood; and a covenant meal is shared in the presence of God. Similarly, we hear the Word of God in the Gospel; we respond in faith; the baptismal commitment is consummated by sealing with the blood of Christ; and He who is both priest
60 and victim of sacrifice becomes our food in holy Communion. The difference between the ancient ceremony and the new rite of Christ is that our Mass consummates an infinitely more intimate relationship: "For while the law was given through Moses, this enduring love came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1.17). The old covenant was an engagement between God and humankind; the new is marriage, fruitful in divine children.

65 In the liturgy of the Mass we first receive the Word of the Lord to call us to intimacy and to guide and shape our lives; we next receive our Lord Jesus in Communion--Him bodily, the power of His Spirit, and His life as principle of our lives; we finally receive the commission to go forth to love and serve the Lord, now and forever. All of these gifts we receive inasmuch as the Mass truly is revelatory, truly communicative of
70 divine truth and love.

In the liturgy of the Mass we also act. We give as human persons united with Jesus our Head and priest. Having been baptized, our goods pertaining to human nature and the fruits of our work already are holy in the sight of God, just as Jesus already was holy when he undertook His sacrificial life. We offer what we are and have at the offertory
75 so that it may be formed into Christ in glory at the consecration; with Jesus we offer Him and ourselves, now united as one, to the Father. These offerings we make inasmuch as the Mass truly is a fitting response to God, truly an acceptance of all He gives and a loving return of all of it to Him.

The preceding makes clear how complex the Eucharist is. But despite this richness,
80 the Eucharist also is simple. The complexity is not that of a multiplicity of unrelated purposes and disjointed parts. Rather, it is the complexity of a very perfect, but also infinitely rich, relationship. God loves us, gives Himself to us, gives us a perfect response, and we make this response as our own, through, with, and in our Lord Jesus. Thus we are fully ourselves but perfectly united with Jesus, and our lives are *joined with His*,

to our ennoblement and to the glory of God the Father.

Early in his recent apostolic letter, Dominicae Cenae, John Paul II reaffirms . . . the fact that Eucharistic worship constitutes the soul of all Christian life. In fact Christian life is expressed in the fulfilling of the greatest commandment, that is to say in the love of God and neighbour, and this love finds its source in the Blessed Sacrament, which is commonly called the Sacrament of love.

The Eucharist signifies this charity, and therefore recalls it, makes it present and at the same time brings it about. Every time that we consciously share in it, there opens in our souls a real dimension of that unfathomable love that includes everything that God has done and continues to do for us human beings, as Christ says: "My Father goes on working, and so do I" (Jn 5.17). Together with this unfathomable and free gift, which is charity revealed in its fullest degree in the saving Sacrifice of the Son of God, the Sacrifice of which the Eucharist is the indelible sign, there also springs up within us a lively response of love. We not only know love; we ourselves begin to love. We enter, so to speak, upon the path of love and along this path make progress. Thanks to the Eucharist, the love that springs up within us from the Eucharist develops in us, becomes deeper and grows stronger.

Eucharistic worship is therefore precisely the expression of that love which is the authentic and deepest characteristic of the Christian vocation. This worship springs from the love and serves the love to which we are all called in Jesus Christ [note omitted]. A living fruit of this worship is the perfecting of the image of God that we bear within us, an image that corresponds to the one that Christ revealed to us. As we thus become adorers of the Father "in spirit and truth" (Jn 4.23), we mature in an ever fuller union with Christ, we are ever more united to him, and--if one may use the expression--we are ever more in harmony with him.[1] Here the complexity of the Eucharist is led back to its central simplicity, the simplicity of communion in divine love, of which the Eucharist is the Sacrament. The love is revealed in Christ's sacrifice, we respond to it, and by participation in this holy Sacrament we grow toward the maturity of heavenly completion in Christ by becoming ever more closely united, even during our earthly life, with our heavenly Lord Jesus.

I now turn to the contemplation of the various facets of this sublime Sacrament. I shall consider them in the order in which the purposes of the Eucharist are stated by Trent, as summarized above. The first of these is the remembrance of the works of Jesus; the holy Sacrament is received to preserve His memory and proclaim His death until He comes in glory. In this aspect, the Eucharist makes the sacrifice of Christ present to us so that we can share in it.

B. How is sharing in the Eucharist sharing in the sacrifice of Christ?

The free acceptance as the will of the Father of death by Jesus is the sacrifice which seals the new Covenant in blood--that is, in life, since blood is life (cf. Heb 9.11-20; Ex 24.8; Mt 26.28). The sacrifice of Jesus is only one (cf. Heb 9.28); He offers this sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Heb 8.1-6; 9.24).

What is central to the unique sacrifice of Christ is His perfect obedience to the will of the Father: "I have come to do your will" (Heb 10.9). This single righteous act of Jesus displaced Adam's sin as the principle of humankind's relationship with God and "brought all men acquittal and life" (Rom 5.18). Through and in Jesus God reconciles the world to Himself (cf. 2 Cor 5.18-19). The gift of Himself Jesus makes by His obedience to the Father is neither of Himself alone nor for Himself alone. The gift seals the covenant of love for all humankind, and the gift includes all who are and ever will be united with Jesus as members of His Body.[2]

In chapter eleven, section O, and chapter twelve, section J, I explained the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus as a human act carried out both in the Last Supper and in the Mass. An essential point to remember is that Jesus' human act is not what is done to Him, but rather what He does in choosing to eat the Passover with His friends in order to share Himself with them (and through them with us), knowing that in doing so He is freely accepting suffering and death. This human act is not a passing event; it is a self-determination. It lasts (He never changes His mind about it).

Once this point is understood, one can grasp the sense in which the Eucharist is done in remembrance of Jesus' act and is received to preserve His memory and proclaim His death (cf. 1 Cor 11.26).[3] There is no question here of recalling to mind a past event as past. Jesus' redemptive act is not something apart from Him; it precisely is the human fulfillment of His human, earthly life. That fulfillment, a gift of obedience to the Father on behalf of all of us, exists in Jesus accepted and sealed with glory. Its remembrance is a re-expression of an inherently timeless, existential reality, much as the remembrance of a wedding anniversary is the re-expression of the inherently atemporal reality of the real communion of faithful love, which is the bond of marriage itself.

As I explained in chapter twelve, section J, what Jesus actually does outwardly to carry out His redemptive commitment He does first in the Last Supper. But in doing what He does there, He commands others to carry out further performances of the same type to keep His redemptive act present. Carried out as execution of this command, the consecrations at Masses were all essentially included in the single act of Jesus at the Last Supper. For this reason, the central reality in the Eucharist is the consecration.[4] In consecrating, the priest speaks in the very Person of Christ, doing Jesus' own act--an act only Jesus personally can do--for Him (cf. DS 1320/698), much as a proxy in a marriage ceremony acts for (not in place of nor simply as a delegate of) the absent party who alone can give marital consent binding upon himself or herself.

The Council of Trent, in its teaching on the Mass, does not say that the sacrifice of the Mass precisely is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, nor does it say that the offering is the same offering. Rather, it holds that the unity of the Mass and the cross is in this: Christ offered Himself in a bloody manner on the cross, and now offers Himself in an unbloody manner (cf. DS 1743/940). Vatican II, however, says: "As often

as the sacrifice of the cross in which 'Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed' (1 Cor 5.7) is celebrated on an altar, the work of our redemption is carried on" (LG 3). One might suppose that the two councils disagree. But to suppose this would be to make a mistake.

5 The sacrifice of the Mass and of the cross is one, yet they are many; the offering is unique, yet it is repeated. The central redemptive choice, by which Jesus is as man our saving Lord, is one and unique. The performances--that is, the outward, behavioral carryings out--which express this choice are many. The first performance of it was in the Last Supper, which carried out Jesus' choice in which He freely accepted what He
10 knew would be done to Him--namely, arrest, mistreatment, and murder. The daily performances since then of what He commanded to be done in His memory also carry out that same choice. The unity of the sacrifice is primarily in the unity of the self-determining act of Jesus and secondarily in the ordered unity of the performances, since those in the Mass already are commanded in the Last Supper. The multiplicity of the sacrifice is in
15 the multiplicity of the outward expressions of the same personal reality.

This situation is common in our experience. It is not unlike the multiplicity of performances which execute the marital commitment. In the rite of marriage, it is carried out by verbal expressions of consent; in subsequent consummating sexual intercourse, it is carried out in fitting bodily communion; in faithful abstinence with respect to any
20 other potential sexual partner, the marital commitment also is outwardly realized and manifested. Even the wearing of a wedding ring is an act which performs the same commitment. The fundamental marital act is the commitment which inherently lasts forever; the many expressions are not so many additional marriages.

Similarly with the offering of Jesus which marries humankind to God. It is one
25 lasting act with many and somewhat varied outward expressions. Among these, the performances which are consecratory acts in Masses are special, for they were specifically included in the Last Supper, they continue that same sacred banquet, and they make Jesus in glory bodily present among us.

The making present of the redemptive act in the Eucharist provides us with a visible
30 sacrifice, which we need in order to be able to participate as men and women in our Lord Jesus' act as a man (cf. DS 1740/938). As the General Instruction of the Roman Missal states: "The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and the people of God hierarchically structured, is the center of the entire Christian life for both the universal and the local Church, as well as for each of the faithful (cf. SC 41; LG 11; PO 2, 5, and 6; CD 30; UR 15; [reference omitted])."[5] The Eucharist, therefore, is our sacrifice too. The faithful must learn, according to Vatican II, to participate fully:
35 ". . .by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves too" (SC 48).

Jesus offers the Father His commitment of obedience. We must share in this offering and live it out in our own lives. Such is Eucharistic worship as sacrifice: the
40 living of Christian life (cf. Rom 12.1-2). We "too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit, into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 2.5).[6]

45 C. How does the Eucharist nourish spiritually those who live with Jesus' life?

There are three distinct, inseparable aspects of our communion with Jesus. By adoption and the Spirit's gift we share divine life with Him; this sharing is achieved
50 in baptism. By anointing with the Spirit we are commissioned to live our own lives as a share in His revelatory and redeeming life; this communion in cooperative work is established by confirmation. The Eucharist adds a third dimension: We are united with Jesus bodily and are actuated by His resurrection life. "For 'the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ does nothing other than transform us into that which we consume'" (LG 26).[7]

55 The normal process of digestion involves ingesting food and transforming nonliving (although chemically organic) material into one's own living flesh. The Eucharist is, as it were, a sort of inverse digestion. We ingest Jesus' living, bodily Self, and He makes our mortal flesh come alive with His glorious resurrection being (cf. DS 802/430). This mysterious, bodily communion with Him is both necessary and effective to maintain
60 and perfect both the sharing in divine life and the cooperation in human action by which we also are united with Jesus (cf. Jn 6.44-58).

The situation is not unlike the communion of marital love, which, as I will explain in section I, below, is a sacrament of the communion of Christ and the Church. In
65 marital love, the husband and wife are one organism insofar as they together constitute one single person generating; that the two are one in flesh is a simple statement of biological fact. From this communion in flesh proper to marriage, the cooperative action and even the sharing together in divine life of a married couple take on their special modality. Acts of marital intercourse engaged in worthily "signify and promote that mutual self-giving by which spouses enrich each other with a joyful and thankful will"
70 (GS 49). Holy Communion works similarly. The worthy reception of the Sacrament signifies and promotes the mutual self-giving of our Lord in glory and us, and promotes our imperfect gift toward the measure of His fullness (cf. Eph 4.15-16).

75 D. Some theological errors concerning the Eucharist

The difficulty people have in grasping this truth arises in part from their tendency to separate personal reality from bodiliness. Many theologians whose dogmatic accounts of the sacraments are not unorthodox nevertheless presuppose a false metaphysics,
80 according to which the body is a medium or an instrument through which and by which personal contact occurs.[8] They assume that the person is a spiritual subject, the thinking and choosing self, who has a body, very much as one has an automobile or a suit of clothes. This assumption is the metaphysical doctrine called "body-self dualism."

But dualism is altogether false. A human person is not a thinking and choosing self concealed in a body-object. Rather, a human person is a living human body who,

among other things, thinks and chooses. The theological proof of the falsity of body-self dualism is that the Word who was from the beginning and whom we proclaim is the very same reality as was seen and heard by the apostles (cf. 1 Jn 1.1-2). If body-self dualism were true, the apostles would not have seen the Word Incarnate, but only a bodily sacrament of Him.[9]

The Catholic Church is utterly and absolutely committed to a realistic and straightforward understanding of the bodily presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. It will not do to say that the difference between the Eucharist and the other sacraments is one of degree only, because the "complete humanity of Christ, glorified body as well as soul, is active in all the sacraments." [10] Our Lord Jesus in glory is active--His actions are visible to us--in all the sacraments. Nevertheless, His own human self is bodily present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine in a wholly distinct way (cf. SC 7).

Expounding the traditional teaching on the Eucharist--a tradition he says he personally received from Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 11.23)--St. Paul makes clear the realism of the Lord's bodily presence in the Sacrament by pointing out the implications if one receives Jesus unworthily:

This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself (1 Cor 11.27-29). Just as unloving intercourse in marriage does not promote mutual self-giving, so the unworthy reception of Communion does not nourish the soul to eternal life. In both cases, one ought to realize what one is doing and respect the sacred reality of flesh.

The so-called theology of "transfinalization" or "transignification" is a product of the development of understanding of the sacraments as revelatory signs and as actions. Much in this approach is excellent. However, this approach has failed insofar as it presupposes body-self dualism and takes inadequate account of the realism of Jesus' bodily presence in the Eucharist.[11]

One often encounters false statements such as the following: "Just as bread exists as bread only in relation to man, so what now is before him stands to him as the Body of Christ because of the new and essential relationship it has with him." [12] Implicit here is a denial of the mysterious but simple truth the Catholic Church believes. A bodily human individual does not stand as such to others because of his or her relationship to them; on the contrary, a bodily human individual stands as such to others because he or she is this bodily person. We must recognize the Body of Christ, as Paul says. We do not create Him by the projection (by faith) of Christ-bodiliness upon a piece of bread and a cup of wine.

In the Eucharist Christ is bodily present, not present merely "by virtue of the sign and the power of the sacrament but in his proper nature and true substance" (DS 700/355). What it is for Jesus so to be present is mysterious, because such being-with-us is unique in all reality.

However, there is nothing mysterious about the negative side of the situation. We know exactly what it means to point to anything which is not bread or not wine and to say truly: "This is not bread; that is not wine." In exactly the same sense that I can point to a sirloin steak and say truly, "This is not bread," or point to the Empire State Building and say truly, "That is not wine," I can point to the Eucharistic species after the consecration and say the same (cf. DS 1256/666). For immediately after the consecration, our Lord Jesus Himself, the very author of our holiness, is present whole and entire, body and blood, soul and divinity, under both species (cf. DS 1257/667; 1639-1640/876).

The whole substance--that is, the reality--of the bread is changed into the substance of Jesus' body, and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the substance of His blood, but since He now dies no more, body and blood are not separated from one another or from His human self and divine Personhood (cf. DS 1642/877; 1652/884). It follows that we ought to worship the Eucharist according to its reality, and have no less a duty to do so because the Sacrament was instituted that we might receive Communion (cf. DS 1654/886; 1656/888).

Speculative theologians often get into difficulties about this sublime mystery because they try to understand it in categories other than those uniquely proper to it. But in the case of the Eucharist, seeing is not believing; no more is metaphysics believing. Believing is believing, and if one's sight or reasoning leads to a different conclusion than that of simple faith, one concludes that sight and reason are untrustworthy.

Less by professional theologians writing as such than in popular discussions and encounters with nonbelievers, one often meets the challenge: "If the Eucharist is understood realistically, then in receiving it you are engaging in cannibalism." How should this challenge be answered?

There are diverse reasons why people eat human bodies. In some instances, the reason for consuming a human body (or some part of it) is a moral or religious motive--for example, to share in the person's virtuous characteristics, or to keep the dead individual from reverting back into the dust from which he or she came. When cannibalism of this sort is considered, one can see that the underlying motive is by no means repulsive; the only difficulty is that the procedure does not work. One does not gain courage by eating the dead heart of a noble warrior, and one does not preserve one's mother from hades by digesting her dead body.

Essentially, the Eucharist is unlike cannibalism because the Eucharist does what it signifies. The sacramentality of the presence makes available at all times and places and by all individuals for eating the one, unique, living Body who is the glorified Incarnate Word. The cannibals eat the dead remains of a person; we eat Jesus alive and glorious, and our eating neither divides nor harms Him. Rather, He transforms us by, as it were, inverse digestion, as I explained in section C, above.

E. How does the Eucharist transform Christian moral life?

In section B, I explained how sharing in the Eucharist is sharing in the redemptive act of Jesus; in section C, I explained how the Eucharist spiritually nourishes those who live with Jesus' life. Trent next says that the worthy participation in the Eucharist protects us from mortal sin and overcomes venial sin; Vatican II formulates the point affirmatively by saying that the Eucharist fills the mind with grace. How so?

The principle of an answer is the point I made at the end of section B. To participate in the Eucharist is to offer the sacrifice of Christ with Him, having united oneself with Him, and thus to offer oneself as a gift to the Father.

Our common experience is that the more we do which is loving toward anyone, the more we love that person. To give gifts is an act of love; we care most about those (such as our children) to whom we have given most. Small children love their parents in a certain way; children can be grateful and affectionate. But children love more maturely as they grow up and do things for their parents. We tend to assume that love is presupposed by any act which is beneficent. It is, but beneficence also nourishes and matures our love. In doing good, we become involved in the one to whom we have done it. Where one's treasure is, there one's heart is. And in one to whom one has done much good, one finds that good, still one's own although now another's.

God loves us so much because everything good in us comes from Him; He hardly wishes ill to what is so entirely His own.

In the Eucharist, we first bring forward goods which God supplies from the bounty of nature and by the work of human hands: bread and wine. These we offer, blessing God in thanks. The priest prays quietly: "Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble and contrite hearts." The gifts represent our very selves, created by God and shaped by our freedom in goodness due to God's grace. We ask God to receive us and to be pleased with this self-offering.[13]

Far surpassing the initial offering of the gifts is the offering--to which it leads--of the sacrifice of Christ by the priest who acts in His person, and by all the faithful who offer Jesus through and with the priest, and also offer themselves united and transformed in Him (cf. SC 48). Vatican II makes clear that priests must teach the faithful "to offer to God the Father the divine Victim in the sacrifice of the Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives" (PO 5). The requirement and power to make this offering arises from the Eucharist itself:

The other sacraments, as well as every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are linked with the holy Eucharist and are directed toward it. For the most blessed Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ Himself, our Passover and living bread. Through His very flesh, made vital and vitalizing by the Holy Spirit, He offers life to men. They are thereby invited and led to offer themselves, their labors, and all created things together with Him (PO 5).

Jesus' gift of Himself to us calls forth our gift of ourselves with Him to the Father. Conscious that He gives us so much, we wish to give Him something in return.

Vatican II very clearly teaches that all acts fitting to a Christian become spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God (LG 10). The priestly commission of the faithful at large equips them to

. . . produce in themselves ever more abundant fruits of the Spirit. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labor, their mental and physical relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne--all of these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pt 2.5). During the celebration of the Eucharist, these sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father along with the Lord's body. Thus as worshipers whose every deed is holy, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (LG 34).

Made specifically in reference to the laity, this statement surely is no less true of every faithful Christian. Through the Eucharist, everything fitting in one's life becomes a gift of God.

Thus, by a sort of virtuous circle, one comes to love God more as one gives Him more, and loving Him more one wishes to give Him still more. In this way the Eucharist fills the mind with grace, overcomes venial sin, and keeps us from mortal sin.

In his great encyclical on the liturgy, Mediator Dei, Pius XII strongly emphasizes the theme of offering by all the faithful, which has been developed further by Vatican II. In one respect, Pius' treatment offers an explicit indication which I do not find in the Council's documents--namely, that one offers oneself at Communion. By receiving Jesus, one ought to accept His love and offer oneself to His service.[14] This requirement of acceptance is expressed in the words of the Dismissal: "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." John Paul II also suggests that the Eucharist orders Christian life subsequent to it toward completion in Christ:

To this sacrifice [of Christ upon the cross], which is renewed in a sacramental form on the altar, the offerings of bread and wine, united with the devotion of the faithful, nevertheless bring their unique contribution, since by means of the Consecration by the priest they become the sacred species. This is made clear by the way in which the priest acts during the Eucharistic Prayer, especially at the consecration, and when the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice and participation in it are accompanied by awareness that "the Teacher is here and is calling for you" (Jn 11.28). The call of the Lord to us through his Sacrifice opens our hearts, so that, purified in the mystery of our Redemption, they may be united to him in Eucharistic communion, which confers upon participation at Mass a value that is mature, complete, and binding on human life: "The Church's intention is that the faithful not only offer the spotless victim but also learn to offer themselves and daily to be drawn into ever more perfect union, through Christ the Mediator, with the Father and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all." [15]

In this summary, all of the aspects of the offering, which draws our entire lives into the Eucharist and directs our entire lives by it, are indicated.

There are many reasons for living a good Christian life: To prepare the material of the pleroma (cf. GS 38), to be united more closely with the obedience of Jesus, to carry His redemptive love to others, and to perfect our very selves in His love. All of these are gathered up in the supreme consideration: The virtuous circle of love. God has given us everything, and so we must thank Him with, through, and in Jesus. Thanking Him we love Him the more, and loving Him the more we must live more perfectly to make a more perfect gift.

A loving father wants of his children only their own fulfillment in goodness. If sons and daughters give their father the joy of their being good children, mutual love and satisfaction grows, and the relationship becomes ever more perfect. The children ever strive harder to please their father; he in turn rewards them with his approval. Thus it is between us and God, by virtue of the covenant friendship carried on continually in the Eucharist.

15 F. How is the Eucharist a pledge of glory?

The giving of a gift is only successful in building a relationship of love if the gift is accepted and treasured by the one to whom it is given. If we offer God our whole lives, will He accept? Will such a gift mean anything to Him? The answer is found in Jesus. His sacrifice is accepted: Christ is risen! What more could the Son ask of His Father? The resurrection in glory, the establishment of our Lord Jesus at the Father's right hand in power (cf. Rom 1.4)--this divine act is acceptance.

Now, the Eucharist unites us with Jesus as He truly is, not as He once was living on the earth or dead in the tomb. From the point of view of the end of history, all of our lives, all of human history, is one long preparation of the gifts which are to be offered to the Father in, through, and with Jesus for the final transformation in which the new city of God will come down from heaven (cf. Rev 21.1-2). The Spirit of Christ frees all human persons

. . .so that by putting aside love of self and bringing all earthly resources into the service of human life they can devote themselves to that future when humanity itself will become an offering accepted by God.

The Lord left behind a pledge of this hope and strength for life's journey in that sacrament of faith where natural elements refined by man are changed into His glorified Body and Blood, providing a meal of brotherly solidarity and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (GS 38).

The virtuous circle of Eucharistic devotion means growing intimacy with God. Growing intimacy can only end in perfect intimacy (cf. SC 48). Therefore, the Eucharist is the pledge of glory (cf. Eph 3.16-19).

Again, the blood of Christ has opened the way into the holy of holies (cf. Heb 10.19-20). In the Eucharist we share in this blood: Therefore, we pass through the veil, which is His flesh, into the eternal temple of God. Christ not only died for us but also was raised for us (cf. 2 Cor 5.15-18; Eph 2.1-10). [16] In the Eucharist, we receive the resurrection life of Jesus (cf. Jn 6.54). Therefore, in the Eucharist we have the pledge--not simply a promise but a present participation in--heavenly glory.

The mystery which was hidden for the ages from everyone was that of Jesus Himself, the mystery of God present among us. This mystery makes known to us--that is, gives us the full experience of--glory which is priceless, the glory of divine life. The Eucharist precisely is Jesus in us, our hope of glory (cf. Col 1.26-27). In view of this hope, we strive toward completion in our Lord Jesus and are impelled to work in the apostolate "by that energy of his which is so powerful a force within" us (cf. Col 1.28-29).

G. How does the Eucharist constitute the Church?

Christian life, like the fall of Adam and its consequences, is essentially social. Jesus is the center of our lives (cf. Rom 5.12-19). All adopted children of God are such insofar as they are Christians--that is, insofar as they are in Jesus (cf. Rom 8.9-10, 35-39).

"Our Savior left the Eucharist in his Church as a symbol of the unity and love which he desired to unify and unite all Christians" (DS 1635/873a), as the Council of Trent teaches. Vatican II teaches:

Day by day the liturgy [especially the Eucharist] builds up those within the Church into the Lord's holy temple, into a spiritual dwelling for God (cf. Eph 2.21-22)--an enterprise which will continue until Christ's full stature is achieved (cf. Eph 4.13) (SC 2).

In his recent apostolic constitution, Dominicae Cenae, John Paul II takes up this theme and clarifies it. The Eucharist builds up the Church (cf. LG 11). The Sacrament involves both fraternal communion of the members of the Church with one another and the communion of Jesus with each participant. The latter is basic, for "in Eucharistic Communion we receive Christ, Christ himself; and our union with him, which is a gift and grace for each individual, brings it about that in him we are also associated in the unity of his Body which is the Church." [17]

The reason why the Eucharist can build up the Church is that it establishes real communion--the true union which does not destroy distinction--of love between each person and our Lord Jesus. By the holy Sacrament, each of us abides in Him and He in each of us (cf. Jn 6.56-57). But by making all of us one with the One, the Eucharist also establishes us in a bond of communion with one another (cf. Jn 17.20-23). This bond is ecclesial communion; it is constitutive of the Church.

Sharing in the body of Christ and in His precious blood, we who share become one body in Him (cf. 1 Cor 10.16-17). Abuses in the liturgy are divisive, and the divisiveness of such abuses is all the more unfitting since the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity (cf. 1 Cor 11.17-34).

Someone might object to the position that the Eucharist constitutes the Church by saying that the preaching of the Gospel, faith, and baptism constitute the Church. All the baptized, after all, are united in Christ. The answer to this objection is that

baptism unites Christians only by admitting them to the Church, whose inner unity is realized in the Communion of the Eucharist in Christ. Baptism is important as an admission ticket, but it is fulfilled only in the Eucharist to which it admits. Vatican II teaches:

5 Baptism, therefore, constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who
 have been reborn by means of it. But baptism of itself, is only a beginning, a
 point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of
 life in Christ. Baptism is thus oriented toward a complete profession of faith,
 a complete incorporation into the system of salvation such as Christ Himself willed
 it to be, and finally, toward a complete participation in Eucharistic communion
 10 (UR 22).

Thus Vatican II in its decree concerning ecumenism. Catholics and other Christians share
 in the same baptism, but the unity is defective, because others cannot rightly share in
 the only authentic and perfect celebration of the Eucharist--that of the Catholic Church.

15 Again, someone might object that stress upon the sacramentality of Communion tends
 to separate the Eucharist as Sacrament from the Mass as sacrifice. The answer to this
 objection is that the consecration of the Mass, which expresses Christ's redemptive act
 in the present, is altogether directed to Communion in Him: "'Take this, all of you,
 and eat it. . . .'" "Take this, all of you, and drink from it. . . ." At the same time,
 20 Communion can unite us with our Lord Jesus in glory and build us up as His body only be-
 cause Communion really is a sharing in His redemptive sacrifice which reconciles us with
 the Father.

In considering the manner in which the Eucharist constitutes the Church, one ought
 not to overlook the union which we gain in the Eucharist with the saints in heaven. In
 Jesus we are united with them; in the Eucharist we share in a hidden way in the glory
 25 they share overtly. Memory of the mother of Jesus and of the other saints in the Euchar-
 ist honors them, stimulates our love for them, and so draws us closer to Jesus Himself
 (cf. LG 48-50).

30 H. How the Eucharist transforms culture and history

During His earthly life, Jesus drew people to Himself and in doing so drew them to-
 gether into the communion of being His disciples. Like a fan club, the followers of
 Jesus found their reason for mutual relationship among themselves in their more basic
 interest in Him (cf. Jn 6.1-13). Similarly today, people who accept the faith have a
 35 common bond, but they truly become a working community when they must meet to celebrate
 the Eucharist. This meeting requires common effort and a common place and property.
 People in a new neighborhood who do not know one another gather, build a church, and be-
 come one people. In former times, people scattered over a wide area created a town by
 building a church, not merely by finding a convenient place to barter.

40 In meeting together, those baptized into Jesus and bonded to Him and one another
 by Communion recognize one another as brothers and sisters. From this recognition grows
 love of neighbor and its works, the bearing of one another's burdens (cf. Gal 6.2; 1 Jn
 2.1-11, 4.19-21).

The actual performance of the Eucharist requires the use of many things: the ma-
 45 terials of the gifts, of the church building and furnishings, of vestments; the works of
 liturgical language, music, and art; the whole secondary system of things involved in
 preparing the liturgy, the sacramentals, and so forth. All of these uses transform what
 is used toward holiness. In this way, the Eucharist creates its own culture and begins
 to consecrate the whole world to the service of God (cf. LG 34).

50 This process requires a real effort on the part of those who prepare the Eucharist
 and arrange the necessary material conditions. The introduction into the Eucharist of
 elements which already are specified by a secular, nonreligious meaning--for example, of
 popular musical forms--reverses the process of transformation. In symbol, the world
 transforms Christ rather than He the world. Many abuses in recent years are objection-
 55 able precisely for this reason. Of course, the essential meaning of the Eucharist can
 remain despite such abuses. Moreover, anyone with good taste must realize that in a
 Church which truly is catholic (that is, universal) vulgarity is likely to be the norm
 rather than the exception.

In forming culture, the Eucharist, which is profoundly social, also is shaping not
 60 only the lives of individuals but even the entire course of the world's history, direct-
 ing the immense complex of human words and deeds, accomplishments and sufferings to the
 end appointed by God. Insofar as the Eucharist is a memorial which keeps present and
 effective--that is, available for our communal participation--the redemptive act of our
 Lord Jesus, the Eucharistic act more than any other determines humankind to be what it
 65 is in response to the divine vocation. At the same time the reality of the Eucharistic
 act in the world makes every moral evil, every refusal to accept communion with Jesus,
 into a more monstrous sin and a greater perversion of the power of humankind for ful-
 fillment.

Hence, although history does not have an over-all pattern which we can interpret,
 70 it is not without sense. Still this sense is not single and unambiguous. The whole of
 history presents us with the vision of the field of the Lord, in which fine wheat is
 seen growing toward its maturity while, at the same time, weeds flourish with incredible
 vitality, almost seeming to overwhelm the wheat.

History has several stages. At first, with the dawn of creation, it had an unam-
 75 biguous direction toward God. With the fall, this direction was changed to an unambig-
 uous thrust away from God. Left to itself, humankind would have wandered endlessly in
 empty space. With the revelatory work which prepared for the coming of the Word and the
 repeated covenants between God and humankind, history was redirected into an orbit about
 the Incarnate Word. But with Him, the course of history does not become a simple path
 80 of descent to our heavenly home. Those who share in the adventure of humankind's his-
 tory struggle for the controls; the course of history is erratic, although it cannot be
 forced out of its orbit around our risen Lord. Eventually, He will return, come aboard
 the world, take control of it, and guide it down to its heavenly destination.

Progress in the course of human history is not from the material to the immaterial,

from the biological to the intellectual. The Word was made flesh, and now His flesh is wholly transfused with the glory of His divinity. Progress in history is not from the human to the divine; our Lord Jesus is perfect man as well as true God, and the fulfillment of history is to be He Himself, nothing else. Progress in history is from the carnal to the spiritual, from creation alienated from God to creation fulfilled in Him. This progress occurs within history, but it is not a progress of history. The integrity of the historical order is passing away as this world dissolves. But behind the Eucharistic species, hidden with God in Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem which will flourish from age to age already is being built up (cf. GS 38-39). We await its coming.[18]

10 I. How does the sacrament of marriage relate to the Eucharistic life?

Most Christians are married couples. For them the preparation of the gift to be offered in the Eucharist is in the mutual self-giving of marriage; the love and service of the Lord to which they are sent from the Eucharist begins in the love and service of their children and of one another (cf. GS 48). Children are holy, and women are saved by bearing and raising them (cf. 1 Cor 7.14; 1 Tm 2.14). Likewise, most men learn to love somewhat as they ought only in trying to fulfill family responsibilities. They must subordinate selfish interests to the needs of their wives and the demands--often at once irresistible, urgent, and unreasonable--of infants, of difficult adolescents, and even of grown children.

The Church never has doubted that marriage is a way toward heavenly perfection (cf. DS 802/430). St. Paul teaches that the love of husbands and wives for each other ought to be appropriate to the two different roles.[19] The wife's love ought to be an act of receptive submission and respect, which excludes any claim to liberated autonomy; the husband's love ought to be an act of tender and perfect care and even, if necessary, of absolute self-sacrifice, which excludes any temptation to domineering exploitation (cf. Eph 5.22-33). Jesus gave Himself for the Church, to purify her in the baptismal bath for her marriage to Him, the Lamb of God, a marriage which begins in the Eucharist. Similarly husbands must sacrifice themselves to make their wives' love perfect (cf. Eph 5.25-27). Marriage foreshadows the union of Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5.32).

The Eucharist in constituting the Church also includes the special, holy relationship of marriage; it makes husband and wife who share in the Eucharist members of one another in a more than natural way:

35 Truly partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10.17). In this way all of us are made members of His body (cf. 1 Cor 12.27), "but severally members one of another" (Rom 12.5) (LG 7).

40 In marriage, the man and woman are fulfilled in three ways: by faithful love, by becoming parents, and by constituting a bond of communion with one another which both represents and realizes the communion which Christ establishes in the Eucharist (cf. DS 1327/702). Divine-human communion is perfect unity with full respect for and fulfillment of uniqueness; marriage should express and realize this ideal of love.

45 The primary purpose of marriage--"primary" not in the sense of "most important," since the sacramental aspect is most important, but in the sense of "most specific"--is the having and raising of children, who are called to live forever in heaven (cf. DS 3704-3705/2228-2229). Parenthood need not be biological to be real; every married couple through their whole married life are called to exercise the office of parenthood in one way or another. This common teaching of the Church, which basically is a fact of biology and anthropology, has not in the least been denied or qualified by Vatican II (cf. GS 50).[20]

55 The Eucharist, the sacrament of anointing, and the sacrament of marriage consecrate the earthly foundation of all human and Christian life. The Eucharist centers upon eating, nourishment, and survival itself; the sacrament of anointing consecrates suffering and death, by which life in this world comes to an end; the sacrament of matrimony consecrates sexual reproduction and the coming of new life into the world.

60 Neither anointing nor matrimony has any power apart from the Eucharist (although individuals need not receive the Eucharist on the particular occasion on which they receive the other sacraments to make these sacraments fruitful). Both anointing and matrimony bring the consecration of the glorious life of the risen Jesus, who is present bodily in the Eucharist, in a more explicit and pointed way to bear upon the beginning and end of bodily life, as it comes from nothingness to being and the touch of eternal life, and as it goes from mortal life to fulfillment in the everlasting arms of eternal life Himself.

65 J. How does the Liturgy of the Hours extend the Eucharist throughout one's life?

70 "Christian prayer is above all the prayer of the whole human community, which Christ joins to himself (cf. SC 83)."[21] Christ and his body together pray, as if in chorus, to the Father. This communion in prayer will be clearer if those who pray the Hours love and meditate upon Scripture, in the reading of which our word and God's Word are at one.

The relationship between the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours is clearly stated in the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours:

75 The Liturgy of the Hours extends (cf. PO 5) to the different hours of the day the praise and thanksgiving, the commemoration of the mysteries of salvation, the petitions and the foretaste of heavenly glory, that are present in the eucharistic mystery, "the center and apex of the whole life of the Christian community" (CD 30).

80 The Liturgy of the Hours is an excellent preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist itself, for it inspires and deepens in a fitting way the dispositions necessary for the fruitful celebration of the Eucharist: faith, hope, love, devotion and the spirit of self-denial.[22]

The Eucharist makes the remainder of Christian life serve either as preparation of the gifts to be offered or as execution of the mandate of dismissal to love and serve the

Lord or as both preparation and execution. This extension of the Eucharist needs to be formed, as must all Christian activity, by appropriate prayer. The Church provides the Liturgy of the Hours to serve as the common, suitable act of prayer, to shape life in preparation for and execution of the Eucharist.

5 The Liturgy of the Hours constantly gathers and presents to the Father the petitions of the whole Church. All pastoral activity must be drawn to completion in the Liturgy of the Hours and must flow from its abundant riches. In this chorus of prayer, the Church more perfectly manifests what she is, for her identity as body of Christ is kept continually in actuation; the injunction to pray without ceasing, which cannot be
10 fulfilled by any one individual, is corporately fulfilled by the Church as a community.[23]

All of the aspects of the rich complexity of the Eucharist itself could be distinguished in the Liturgy of the Hours. In this Work of God, Jesus prays, His Church is united with Him in prayer, and the whole course of life is sanctified (cf. SC 83-84). To participate in the Liturgy of the Hours not only is to fulfill a duty of the Church
15 on her behalf, but is to share in the nobility of the Church, the splendid bride of Christ, who stands before God and sings to Him (cf. SC 85). In this earthly choir of unending prayer, the endless liturgy of heaven is anticipated and actuated (cf. SC 8). The hidden glory of God's children almost appears, just as the sun almost appears in the glow which precedes sunrise.

20 The revision of the Liturgy of the Hours mandated by Vatican II was intended to make this prayer more accessible and more fruitful, also as a source of devotion and nourishment for personal prayer (cf. SC 90). The hope of the Church in revising the Liturgy of the Hours was that it might "pervade and penetrate the whole of Christian prayer, giving it life, direction and expression and effectively nourishing the spiritual
25 life of the people of God." [24] This being so, it is especially unfitting if this Work of God continues to be restricted almost entirely to the clergy and religious. The Church wishes the worship of the Hours to be celebrated in parishes, to serve as family prayer, and to be recited by laypeople generally.[25]

Any supposition that there is conflict between personal, private prayer and the
30 Liturgy of the Hours must be rejected absolutely. By using the variants which are provided by the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours can be adapted; on the other hand, by conforming minds to voices, those who pray can adapt themselves to this Liturgy, as they ought to do. In doing this, the Liturgy of the Hours attains its full impact as a principle of Christian moral life:

35 If the prayer of the Divine Office becomes genuine personal prayer, the relation between the liturgy and the whole Christian life also becomes clearer. The whole life of the faithful, hour by hour during day and night, is a kind of leitourgia or public service, in which the faithful give themselves over to the ministry of love toward God and men, identifying themselves with the action of Christ, who by
40 his life and self-offering sanctified the life of all mankind.[26]

The Hours are the suitable and ecclesially provided formative prayer of the liturgy of life to which every Christian is called.

Many people would accept and enter into the Liturgy of the Hours more willingly if they were not put off by the psalms, which are its backbone. They need to be reminded
45 that these songs are divinely given; the Spirit provides them for us to use to respond to God's other revelations of Himself. Moreover, the psalms contain all of the basic spiritual attitudes which we must seek to cultivate: humility, meekness and resignation, detachment, faithfulness, mercy, yearning for perfection, the will to make peace, and the surrender of oneself to the will of God.

50 Of course, the wealth of prayer contained in the psalms will remain largely unappreciated by those who do not study them to the best of their ability and meditate upon them until what is obscure becomes somewhat clear. One thus prepared still must bear in mind that the saying of the psalms within the Liturgy of the Hours is not individualistic prayer. One is praying with others as a Church united with her Lord. The openhearted-
55 ness of charity means that one rejoices with those who rejoice, weeps with those who weep, even when one would not have these sentiments for oneself and those nearby. The very acceptance and practice of this form of interpersonal, nonindividualistic prayer does much to shape those who participate in it to closer conformity to Jesus, who gave His life and breath as a service to others, and never claimed the right to obtain anything for Himself even from His prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours is entrusted in a special way to those in holy orders. They must say it for and on behalf of those they are called to serve. Moreover, in the
65 Liturgy of the Hours they will find not only a source of devotion and strengthening of personal prayer, but nourishment for pastoral and apostolic activity. No one who hopes for apostolic fruitfulness should forget that success depends primarily upon the Holy Spirit, and so is most effectively achieved by prayer, rather than by anything else one might choose to do. Finally, since the Liturgy of the Hours is service of the Word, faithfulness to it ensures the reception of the Word, with its life and power, into the lives of those who ponder it.[27]

70 K. What is required of the priest by his special role in the Eucharist?

In the Eucharist, the priest acts in the person of our Lord Jesus Himself (cf. SC 7; LG 28). Hence, the priest does those acts which only Jesus Himself can do, and does
75 them not as personal acts of the priest's own but precisely as acts of Jesus. It follows that in his liturgical roles, particularly in the Eucharist, and most especially in reciting the Canon of the Mass (cf. DS 1745/942), the priest must be careful to say and to do only what the Church prescribes.

There is no room for individualism and self-expression in the liturgy. The options
80 provided by the Church must be used for the good of the particular congregation, not for the satisfaction of the priest or other leading participants. Any effort at expressiveness must be directed toward the expression of Jesus, not toward the self-expression of those who act in His person. Failures in this respect by those in holy orders are a very arrogant and onerous form of infringement upon the rights of the laity.[28]

It seldom happens that a particular bishop or priest is perceptive and intelligent enough, even if he were permitted, to improve upon the liturgical prescriptions of the Church. I commented earlier in this work upon the absurdity of the sense rendered by priests who think they improve the prayer the Church provides that we be freed of all anxiety by substituting "unnecessary" for "all." One might as well pray to be freed from unreasonable doubts in matters of faith or unjustifiable hatred of one's neighbor.

Another seemingly minor change is made by many priests who say something more than "The Body of Christ" and "The Blood of Christ" when they administer the Eucharist to the faithful. A committee of the United States bishops provides a full explanation of the reasons why changes in this simple formula show ignorance, and concludes:

The minister of the Eucharist, therefore, does not have to say "This is the Body of Christ" or "Receive the Body of Christ" because "that which you receive, that you yourselves are by the grace of the redemption," and that is what you confess when you respond Amen. [29]

Needless to say, ministers of the Eucharist who change the formula also cause irritating distraction to many of the faithful, whose attention is called to the self-indulgence of the minister and away from the all-important reality of Communion.

Vatican II considers the leadership role of priests to include certain general responsibilities for building up the Church as a fellowship (cf. PO 6). But central to these responsibilities is that of calling the Church together and offering sacrifice for and with it--the sacrifice of Jesus and the liturgy of the whole of the lives of the Christian people.

The purpose, therefore, which priests pursue by their ministry and life is the glory of God the Father as it is to be achieved in Christ. That glory consists in this: that men knowingly, freely, and gratefully accept what God has achieved perfectly through Christ, and manifest it in their whole lives (PO 2).

Priests have as their chief role: "to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins (cf. Heb 5.1)" (PO 3). In doing this, the priest makes it possible for the faithful to accept the redemption God has accomplished in Christ and to carry it out in daily life.

The preaching of the priest, especially in the Mass, is an important part of his work (cf. PO 4). The homily ought to help the people to assimilate the Scripture they have heard and to apply it in their lives (cf. SC 35). To fulfill their responsibility as homilists, priests must meditate deeply on the Word of God; those who fail to ponder over divine things with love will have nothing worthwhile and fruitful to offer others (cf. PO 13; DV 25).

It is all too common that priests fail to fulfill this responsibility as it should be fulfilled. Some priests take the opportunity of the homily to conduct a rather inadequate and usually irrelevant short course in exegesis; others are satisfied with communicating personal impressions which are hardly grounded in the sacred text (cf. JBC 71.93-99). Apart from these positive mistakes, few priests prepare sufficiently to give an excellent homily.

When one considers that most adult Catholics receive no other religious instruction designed especially for them, the importance of the Sunday homily clearly is very great. It seems to me that it would not be excessive if every priest were to use about one-seventh of his time studying and praying in preparation for liturgical preaching. The time need not be spent in one solid block. It would be well if some time were spent each Sunday afternoon or evening reading and beginning to meditate upon the texts of the following Sunday's Mass, and then the process of inquiry and prayer continued throughout the week, normally to be completed with four or more hours of work Saturday evening.

A priest who does not work to prepare excellent homilies clearly shows that he cares little for the Word of God and has little desire to serve God's people. Careful preparation of homilies also will greatly nourish the priest's own spiritual life, for there hardly is a better form of prayer than intense and regular meditation on the more central passages of Scripture, which the Church chooses for use in the Sunday liturgies.

L. Prayer and devotion especially appropriate to the Eucharistic life

Since the Eucharistic dimension of Christian life includes all of the others, there is a sense in which every fitting prayer and devotion belongs first to the forming and unfolding of Eucharistic worship and piety. Nevertheless, there are certain forms of prayer and devotion which for one or another reason are especially relevant to the Eucharist. I did not mention these in any previous discussion of prayer, precisely in order to consider them here.

Prayers of praise and thanksgiving predominate in the Liturgy of the Hours. Private prayers which extend this same theme in an individual way certainly are appropriate. Among prayers of petition, those which seek the coming of God's kingdom and the fulfillment of His will are especially fitting to the Eucharist insofar as it unites us with heaven. Prayers of self-offering and for enemies are especially suited to the Eucharist insofar as it is in a special sense the sacrament of love. Contemplation in the strict sense also has a peculiar affinity to the Eucharist, since the contemplative seeks to experience the intimate communion, ultimately of spiritual marriage, which is actually accomplished in Eucharistic Communion.

The traditional forms of Eucharistic devotion have been rather softpedaled in recent years. Occasionally, such devotions are criticized, as if the Forty Hours devotions, Corpus Christi processions, and Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament were no longer good and excellent devotions. Such devotions were criticized before--at the time of the Reformation. The Council of Trent definitively condemns anyone who holds that the Blessed Sacrament

. . . is not to be honored with extraordinary festive celebrations nor solemnly carried from place to place in processions according to the praiseworthy universal rite and custom of the holy Church; or that the Sacrament is not to be publicly exposed for the people's adoration, and that those who adore it are idolators (DS 1656/888).

Why does the Church teach definitively on such an apparently small matter? Clearly

because the rejection of such devotions springs from some serious defect in faith in the Eucharist. One who thinks that Eucharistic worship must or should be limited to the Mass (and, for those who cannot receive in Mass, Communion outside Mass) does not understand the Eucharist as the Catholic Church understands it.

5 According to Pius XII, the meditation in which every priest should engage daily most fittingly is closely related to the Eucharist:

Above all else [in the way of prayer], the Church exhorts us to the practice of meditation, which raises the mind to the contemplation of heavenly things, which influences the heart with love of God and guides it on the straight path to Him. This meditation on sacred things offers the best means of preparation before and thanksgiving after the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Meditation also disposes the soul to savor and to comprehend the beauties of the liturgy, and leads us to the contemplation of the eternal verities, and of the marvelous examples and teachings of the Gospel.[30]

15 The meditation described evidently is intended to be richly nourished with Scripture, especially the passages of Scripture which will occur or have occurred in the liturgy.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus also is especially appropriate to prepare for and to carry out the Eucharist in one's whole life. The Sacred Heart is not a mere part of our Lord Jesus, but is His wholeness, with a focus upon the mystery of our redemption. This devotion is directed to the love of Jesus, a love both divine and human, and in its human dimension both emotional and volitional.[31] This devotion has been especially and repeatedly commended by the Church. Pius XII says:

20 . . .it is surely clear that there is no question here of some ordinary form of piety which anyone at his own whim may treat as of little consequence or set aside as inferior to others, but of a religious practice which helps very much towards the attaining of Christian perfection.[32]

A more suitable devotion hardly can be found in the contemporary world, because this one focuses attention upon the threefold love of Jesus, which also is at the heart of the Eucharist, and calls for our loving response, precisely as the holy Sacrament does.[33]

30 Practices such as the Morning Offering and the First Fridays are encouraged by this devotion, and these practices are eminently helpful to the Eucharistic life.[34]

M. Adoro Te devote

35 In the Eucharist, God Himself is present although hidden. We adore Him, aware of His wonderful presence by faith. Knowing His closeness to us, we more easily submit our wills and our entire selves to Him. His greatness surpasses our understanding. His presence condemns our senses as untrustworthy. Only hearing which receives the word of faith can be trusted in this matter. This word of faith we accept, for it is the word of the Lord Jesus, whose truthfulness we cannot doubt.

40 When Jesus was crucified, His divinity was hidden except to those with faith. Now in the Eucharist, even His humanity is hidden. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that our Lord in glory, true God and true man, is wholly present in this Sacrament. Of Him we ask this: that He forget us not as He enters His kingdom. That He not forget us, we ask also that He increase our faith, hope, and love. To nourish these we seek His very life in the Eucharist--His life perfected by His redemptive sacrifice and resurrection to glory.

The blood of Christ cleanses us from sin. In that cleansing, healing blood we ask to be washed, that our lives might be set right. To our Communion with Christ, we bring the gift of ourselves, our lives, our achievements and our failures, our joys and our sufferings. From that Communion we take new strength to love our Lord Jesus and to serve Him to prepare the material of His fulfillment, and to carry on His redemptive work.

Our Lord is with us, even visibly active in the sacraments, as well as bodily present but hidden in the Eucharist. Yet this presence leaves us unsatisfied.

55 See what love the Father has bestowed on us
in letting us be called children of God!

Yet that is what we are.

The reason the world does not recognize us
is that it never recognized the Son.

60 Dearly beloved,
we are God's children now;
what we shall later be has not yet come to light.
We know that when it comes to light
we shall be like him,

65 for we shall see him as he is (1 Jn 3.1-2).

May our heavenly Father be pleased with the work we do as His children in this life, and by the nourishment of the Eucharist bring us soon to the maturity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son (cf. Eph 4.13). Amen.

70 Notes to chapter thirty-five

1. John Paul II, Dominicae Cenaes, 5, L'Osservatore Romano, English edition (March 24, 1980), p. 6.

2. See St. Augustine, City of God, 10, 6.

75 3. See Louis Bouyer, Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of Eucharistic Prayer (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 103-105.

4. See Pius XII, Allocution to the International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy (September 22, 1956), 48 AAS 711.

80 5. The New Order of the Mass, introduction and commentary by J. Martin Patino, et al., trans. Bruno Becker, O.S.B.; Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani, trans. Monks of Mount Angel Abbey (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970), p. 69.

6. See Louis Bouyer, Liturgical Piety (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), pp. 76-78.

85 7. The internal quotation is annotated by the text's note #55, St. Leo the Great, Serm. 63, 7: PL 54, 357 C.

8. An example is E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1963), p. 15: "When a man exerts spiritual influences on another, encounters through the body are necessarily involved." This sort of statement, and there are many others like it in the book, signals the assumption that the person is really the "inward man" or "interiority" which uses the body as an expression and instrument by which to "manifest itself." This assumption is bad metaphysics. See Germain G. Grisez, "Dualism and the New Morality," Atti del Congresso Internazionale Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo VII Centenario, vol. 5, L'Agire Morale (Napoli: Edizioni Domenicane Italiane, 1974), pp. 323-330. Germain Grisez and Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., Life and Death with Liberty and Justice (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 377-380, provide a refutation of dualism and additional references to the literature. Theologians influenced by dualism will deny vehemently that they are dualistic; they will insist on the close relationship of subject and body. They would not need to deny and insist except for the fact that they have a dualistic assumption in the back of their minds which they (rightly) are trying to overcome but (wrongly) do not wish to give up entirely. They are like people with a habit of mortal sin which they must but cannot bring themselves to give up. Unfortunately, most contemporary, European theologians have been heavily influenced by modern continental philosophy, and they have not been able to devote the necessary time and energy to making an adequate purgation of its defects before putting it to theological use. There are exceptions, but they are few. When I say that Schillebeeckx' dogmatic account of the sacraments is not unorthodox, I refer only to the work cited. What he says in other, more recent works is at least ambiguous and perhaps heretical.

9. Hence the title of Schillebeeckx', op. cit., which actually, although not intentionally, is inconsistent with the revealed truth: "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1.14). Christ simply is God; He is not a sacrament of encounter with God.

10. Colman E. O'Neill, O.P., Meeting Christ in the Sacraments (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1964), p. 58. This book is in general sound; perhaps O'Neill does not mean what he here says.

11. See Paul VI, Mysterium Fidei (Encyclical Letter concerning the Teaching and Worship of the Most Holy Eucharist), 57 AAS 753-774, has provided the magisterial evaluation of this approach. Unfortunately, many theologians writing on the Eucharist continue to make statements incompatible with Catholic faith.

12. Thomas D. Stanks, S.S., "The Eucharist: Christ's Self-Communication in a Revelatory Event," Theological Studies, 28 (1967), p. 47. This article contains much that is excellent concerning the revelatory dimension of the Eucharist. Unfortunately, the author seems not to believe what faith teaches about the bodily presence of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.

13. Some have denied the reality of an offering at the Offertory of the Mass, in the interest of emphasizing our offering of Jesus with Him, which is not the Offertory. However, this approach is oversimplifying and lacks foundation to the extent that it excludes what obviously is going on when we bring the gifts forward. See Josef A. Jungmann, S.J., The Early Liturgy: To the Time of Gregory the Great (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1959), p. 117. It is not a case of either/or but of both/and, for the offering in the Mass on our part is complex and dynamic, not simple and static, as is wrongly assumed.

14. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter on the Sacred Liturgy (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1947), #119, p. 43.

15. John Paul II, op. cit., 9, p. 8; the internal quotation at the end is from the General Instruction on the Roman Missal, 55; (in the edition I have cited, p. 56).

16. See Lucien Cerfaux, Christ in the Theology of St. Paul (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), pp. 107-160, for a treatment of the unbreakable unity of the death-and-resurrection of Jesus as redemptive principle. Dying as such would be useless; God redeems us by the raising of Jesus.

17. John Paul II, op. cit., 4, p. 6.

18. For a good introduction to modern work on theology of history, see James N. Connolly, Human History and the Word of God: The Christian Meaning of History in Contemporary Thought (New York and London: Macmillan, 1965).

19. This point often is rejected today. For a positive, philosophical exposition of the Christian conception, see Robert E. Joyce, Human Sexual Ecology (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), pp. 63-85.

20. See Germain Grisez, "Marriage: Reflections based on St. Thomas and Vatican Council II," Catholic Mind, 64 (June 1966), pp. 4-19, for a comparative analysis of texts to show that the teaching of Vatican II is not significantly different from that of St. Thomas. "Primary" as St. Thomas understands it is a concept drawn from logic; in this sense, the primary end of a bridge club is playing bridge even if the people in the club participate for sociability more than for the game, and the primary end of a king is to rule even if his personal motive is to exploit the people. Because few contemporary theologians know logic, Vatican II dispensed with the expression "primary end," although the Council did not change the idea.

21. This and subsequent quotations are from the Apostolic Constitution on and the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, printed in The Liturgy of the Hours, vol. 1. See p. 17.

22. Ibid., p. 29.

23. Ibid., pp. 9 and 31-34.

24. Ibid., p. 16.

25. Ibid., pp. 34, 36, 39.

26. Ibid., p. 18.

27. Ibid., pp. 37-38.

28. See Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, "Third Instruction. . .," in Austin Flannery, ed., Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (Northport, N. Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1975), p. 212.

29. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, The Body of Christ (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1977), pp. 21-23, passage quoted on p. 23.

30. Pius XII, Menti Nostrae (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1950), #45, pp. 17-18.
31. See Pius XII, Haurietis Aquas (Orlando, Florida: Sacred Heart Publication Center, 1974), #86 and #89, pp. 32-33 (the encyclical was published in 1956).
- 5 32. Ibid., #109, p. 41.
33. Ibid., #120 and 123, pp. 45 and 47.
34. On devotion to the Sacred Heart, see Walter Kern, Updated Devotion to the Sacred Heart (Canfield, Ohio: Alba House, 1975).

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*Heavenly Father, we thank You for bringing us together
and for this year's work with all its joys and sorrows.
Grant that what we have done together will count for our salvation
and for the salvation of all of our children and spiritual children,
so that together we may reach fulfillment in our Lord, Jesus Christ,
Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and ever, and forever. Amen. Alleluia!*

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