

**THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST:  
A ROMAN CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING**

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**Introduction**

Belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is central to Roman Catholic theology and practice. Last year we approached the larger topic of belief in the presence of Christ. Presuming our discussion on that topic and intending to locate this year’s discussion within that larger context, I will give an understanding of Roman Catholic belief and practice on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

This is not my specialty and it is a very big topic, with an enormous amount of scholarly literature. Here I intend simply to present a kind of overview of Roman Catholic theology on this topic, with special attention to the ecumenical purpose of our discussion.

## **I. Background Biblical, Liturgical, and Ecumenical Scholarship** **on the Eucharist**

Contemporary Roman Catholic discussions of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist are characterized by a breadth of approach. They intend to broaden the context in which this topic is considered, rather than focus narrowly on understandings of presence. Hence they take place against the background of New Testament scholarship, liturgical studies, and ecumenical agreements. I will review each of these briefly before discussing directly the issue of the presence of Christ.

### ***1. Theological Implications of Recent New Testament Scholarship***

New Testament scholarship<sup>1</sup> on the eucharist today lifts out several themes of importance for our discussion. A first emphasis is the relationship of the eucharist in the New Testament to a meal. All of the discussions about the origins of the eucharist are linked to meals: the meals of fellowship among the followers of Jesus during his public ministry, meals of the post-Easter community in the presence of the Risen Lord, and of course especially the last supper. In eucharistic celebrations the bread and wine are brought together at the end of the meal and then separated from a full actual meal, but the origins of the eucharist in a meal indicates an important context for thinking about the eucharist introduced by the New Testament. Christ is the host at the table where the guests who receive the eucharistic bread and wine share in a common meal and are strengthened for the journey ahead. At the same time, the meals in the New Testament are filled with prayers, blessings, and other words of interpretation, thanksgiving, and exhortation. In this sense, words play an important role at the meal. Jewish meals included prayers of blessing and thanksgiving, and Jesus's words at the last supper give a particular interpretation to the sharing of a meal with his friends. The combination of words and meal are echoed repeatedly in other accounts of the eucharist in the New Testament. Acts 2:42 speaks of the teaching of the apostles and the breaking of the bread, and the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus also links teaching with a meal. The words of Jesus interpreting the Scriptures already make the hearts of the two travellers burn within them, and then they are able to recognize the Risen Lord when he breaks bread with them.

The New Testament accounts of the eucharist also evoke its meaning within the history of salvation, looking backwards and forwards. Because the New Testament stories use food in the settings of Jewish meals of berakoth or blessings, they indicate praise for creation and our continuing dependence on God for our life. The Passover background

evoked by the last supper also points to God's covenant with Israel and the history of deliverance of the Jewish people celebrated by this meal. The link of the eucharist to the death and resurrection of Jesus adds another dimension, by which Jesus is presented as the bread of life, manna for the journey, and a new covenant is sealed in his blood. Thus the atmosphere of the eucharist becomes also the atmosphere of the messianic banquet, celebrated now with the Risen Lord but also in anticipation of his future coming and the final fulfillment in the kingdom of God at the banquet of the Lamb. Different New Testament authors link the eucharist to Christ with different emphases, but all make clear that the eucharist is done in remembrance of him.

The link between eucharistic celebration and Christian life is also evoked by the New Testament texts. Paul stresses the link between a life of faith and the eucharist (I Cor. 10 & 11) and John presents the washing of feet in the setting of the last supper. The self-giving love of Christ that the eucharist celebrates should be imitated in the koinonia of the community, which Acts 2:42 relates to a sharing of resources. Paul condemns the eucharistic practices at Corinth because the rich refused to share with the poor (I Cor. 11:17-34), and the epistle of James makes a similar point. The New Testament also emphasizes the community aspect of the eucharist. Celebrated in community, the eucharist also is intended to nurture community among those who share the one bread and drink the one cup. This is evoked as well by the idea of the new covenant, sealed by Christ's blood, which binds people together as it binds them to Christ. This also means imitating the self-giving love of Christ in service of the others, even at the risk of martyrdom.

Scholarly discussion of sacrificial themes in the New Testament brings out several points. Some emphasize that the words of institution as recounted in the Last Supper accounts refer to Jewish ritual sacrifice practices, especially the Passover lamb and the blood of the covenant. Others stress that Jesus' self-offering as a sacrifice transforms all of these references, linking his death to the suffering servant in Isaiah or to the idea of martyrdom. The eucharist itself in the New Testament is presented as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice or self-giving to God. With the dynamic meaning of "memorial" in the Passover prayers, this means that the eucharist is also in some way a kind of offering in itself. But scholars who link the eucharist to the todah prayer of Jewish celebration see this prayer's sacrificial overtones as a key to the nature of the eucharist as well.

"Biblical scholarship invites us to broaden our sense of eucharistic presence," comments Daniel Donovan.<sup>2</sup> The New Testament begins with the eucharistic action of the community coming together for a meal; in that context the Risen Lord is present among the believers, inviting them to deepen their communion with him and with each other. The words over the bread and the cup emphasize both an identity between Jesus and the bread and wine, as well as the invitation to eat and drink, to participate in a shared meal. ("Take and eat: this is my body...take and drink: this is my blood...). Such sharing at this meal, John says, will unite believers with the risen Lord. Paul tells his readers (I Cor. 10:16) that they have koinonia with Christ by means of the eucharistic elements. In the New Testament, Christ is present as the host of the table, offering himself in the meal that binds those who eat and drink to him and thus to each other.

## *2. Theological Implications of Recent Liturgical Scholarship*

One of the main developments in recent Roman Catholic sacramental theology has been the rediscovery of the importance of the liturgy. The sacramental theology of the eucharist has been especially broadened by this rediscovery. The eucharist is celebrated within the context of community praise and thanksgiving, with invocation of the Holy Spirit, symbolic actions and objects, and a combination of fresh and repeated patterns of words that are both spoken and sung. The liturgy is now understood as a key to the understanding of the sacraments. This is especially true of the scholarly discussion of the eucharistic prayer.

The eucharistic prayer is first a prayer, said in public for and with a whole community. The Greek term anaphora suggests that the prayer is an offering, a lifting of mind and heart to God in praise and worship. While eucharist means “thanksgiving,” the eucharistic prayer also praises God, honors God, gives God glory in the setting of thanksgiving for God’s goodness. The praise and worship expressed in the eucharistic prayer is motivated by remembrance (anamnesis) of the acts of God in creating the world and offering redemption first to the Jewish people and now to all through Jesus Christ. The anamnesis comes to its climax in its focus on the person, life, and ministry of Jesus, his saving death, and resurrection in the power of the Holy Spirit. But the remembrance in the eucharistic prayer also is oriented toward the present and future. The work begun by Christ continues in the present and will be brought to fulfillment by God at the end of time. When the eucharistic prayer proclaims the return of Christ, it affirms trust in God’s future and also confidence in the Risen Christ actively present in the liturgy now so that believers already experience a foretaste of the future they expect. The eucharistic prayer therefore functions also as a kind of confession or proclamation of the core of Christian faith.

Itself an offering, the eucharistic prayer is referred to in the tradition as a sacrifice of praise. “More importantly is the notion that the eucharist, as the sacrament of Christ’s sacrifice, renders him present in his act of self-giving in such a way that the community is able to join with him in it. The ideal is clearly that believers share in his sacrifice not only in the ritual but also in life.”<sup>3</sup> The eucharistic prayer is also linked with communion. It is said over and consecrates bread and wine which are to be shared among the assembly. While Roman Catholics have sometimes underlined the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharistic prayer, today it is clear that this aspect should not be separated from communion. Jesus said the blessing, took the bread, broke it, and shared it with his friends. All four actions are part of the ritual action.

The eucharistic prayer manifests faith in the Trinity, active in history for our salvation. Addressed to the Father, the prayer joins the community to the prayer of Christ to his Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and hence joins believers to each other. The epiclesis invokes the transforming power of the Spirit over both the gifts of bread and wine and the community gathered.

Scholarship on the eucharistic prayer has expanded the discussion of the presence of Christ by placing it within a broader context.

### *3. Ecumenical Agreements on the Eucharist*

Ecumenical dialogue has broadened Roman Catholics deeply in their understanding of the eucharist and their presentation of this understanding, and so I present it as a kind of background for our discussion. I also present it as a marker of how far some key dialogues have come in the discussion, so that we can benefit and in some sense presume the work they have done when we seek the next steps forward in our dialogue.

I will discuss four important dialogue agreements in which Roman Catholics have played a part.

First, the agreement on the eucharist as sacrifice by the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in 1967 represents a significant step of agreement by a national bilateral commission.<sup>4</sup> The focus of this statement is on the two areas that traditionally caused disagreement: sacrifice and presence. On both, remarkable consensus is reported. The agreement recognizes “a significant convergence in the actual practice of eucharistic worship” (#I.2d). Both Roman Catholics and Lutherans affirm the unrepeatable character of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, but agree that “in this memorial we do not only recall past events: God makes them present through the Holy Spirit, thus making us participants in Christ (I Cor. 1:9)” (#I.2a). In addition, Lutheran fears about Catholic language that the Church “offers Christ” are answered by Catholic explanations. United with Christ and each other, Christians “become participants in [Christ’s] worship, his self-offering, his sacrifice to the Father. Through this union between Christ and Christians, the eucharistic assembly ‘offers Christ’ by consenting in the power of the Holy Spirit to be offered by him to the Father.” The agreement continues, “Apart from Christ we have no gifts, no worship, no sacrifice of our own to offer to God” (#I.2a). The agreement also reports the Roman Catholic understanding that the unique propitiatory sacrifice of Christ in the eucharist is efficacious for the sins of the world, and Lutherans can agree. But Lutherans report unanswered questions about Trent’s teaching on the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice offered for the living and the dead (#I.2c).

When the agreement moves to the presence of Christ in the eucharist, it begins by confessing the “manifold presence of Christ” in the Church, baptism, and the reading of the Scriptures and their proclamation. In particular, he is present in the Lord’s Supper “wholly and entirely, in his body and blood, under the signs of bread and wine” (#II.1b.). Christ is “‘really,’ ‘truly’ and ‘substantially’ present in this sacrament,” writers agree, and the Lord’s Supper is “an effective sign: it communicates what it promises. . . .” (#II.1.d). His presence does not come about “through the faith of the believer, or through any human power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word,” and it remains “throughout the eucharistic action” (#II.1d,e). While Lutherans have not stressed the “prolongation of this presence beyond the communion service,” opposition on this is not total since some Lutherans, bringing communion to the sick, understand this as an extension of the service (#II.2e). While Lutherans agree that God effects a change in the

elements of bread and wine (#II.2c.b), they reject “a rationalistic attempt to explain the mystery” of Christ’s presence or the use of “one and only one conceptual framework” to express the change. Hence they agree with Catholics “that” Christ is fully present, but have rejected the term “transubstantiation” since it seemed to specify “how” this presence occurs. But when they hear contemporary Roman Catholics explain transubstantiation, Lutherans have become clear that this doctrine intends to affirm the fact of Christ’s presence and the change in the bread and wine, rather than explaining how this occurs. Hence Lutherans “must acknowledge that it is a legitimate way of attempting to express the mystery, even though they continue to believe that the conceptuality associated with ‘transubstantiation’ is misleading and therefore prefer to avoid the term” (#II.2c.d).

The influence of this statement is seen in the 1978 agreement of the International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, called “The Lord’s Supper.”<sup>5</sup> A much lengthier document, “The Lord’s Supper” begins with some twelve pages of shared confession and agreement on the eucharist as the mystery of faith, given by Christ, through the action of the Holy Spirit, formative of the Church, glorifying the Father, given for the life of the world, for future glory, etc. (#I). This lengthy section helps to demonstrate a shared recognition of the dynamic character of the eucharist. The document affirms the multiplicity of forms of Christ’s presence, adding “the poor and distressed” to the list used by the U.S. document (#15). In a trinitarian section, the document discusses sacrificial interpretations under the rubric “with Christ,” asserting “The Lord present among us wants to draw us into the movement of his life. . . . The more powerless we are to offer to God a worthy sacrifice so much more shall we be taken up by the power of Christ into his offering” (#18). The statement confesses clearly that in the sacrament “Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is present wholly and entirely, in his body and blood, under the signs of bread and wine” (#16). In the power of the Holy Spirit, “the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ through the creative word” and the community comes to a living faith (#23), binding the members in communion together and empowering them to attack the walls of enmity human beings erect against each other (#28). Since the eucharist “is directed towards the salvation of the world,” Christians who celebrate the eucharist “are called to service to the world” (#40). In the second section, the statement looks at remaining areas of classical disagreement. Repeating some of the earlier document’s observations about transubstantiation, the document warns Roman Catholics to remember that the original intention of the reservation of the eucharistic elements was for the distribution to the sick and absent. Lutherans are urged to show their respect for the elements used for the celebration by consuming them unless needed for the sick (#55). Despite differences on the propitiatory character of Christ’s sacrifice in the eucharistic celebration, the statement reports that historical research as well as recent developments have helped overcome these lingering differences. The document lists a growing consensus on the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice, the positive meaning of *ex opere operato*, the role of faith, and the possibility that the fruits of the eucharist may be extended to others (#60).

The third agreed statement on the eucharist for our consideration is the 1982 multilateral agreement of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, “Eucharist” in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry.<sup>6</sup> The Roman Catholic

Church participated in the composition of this document through the Joint Working Group. This document is well-known by Disciples, and therefore I will speak about it more briefly.

Although a relatively short document, “Eucharist” gives a balanced perspective on many aspects of the eucharist. Under the section on the eucharist’s meaning, it includes eucharist as thanksgiving to the Father, memorial (anamnesis) of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful, and meal of the kingdom. In the eucharist, the “great sacrifice of praise” on behalf of all creation, Christ “unites the faithful with himself and includes their prayers within his own intercession” (#4). The statement explains that “the eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit” (#4).

The statement says that the eucharist is “the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ, i.e., the living and effective sign of his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative on behalf of all humankind” (#5), the “sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ” who still intercedes for us (#8). Christ himself is present in this memorial, granting us communion with himself and a foretaste of the final kingdom. The memorial is hence not just a calling to mind of the past, but “the Church’s effective proclamation of God’s mighty acts and promises” (#7). Furthermore, the statement adds, “Christ’s mode of presence in the eucharist is unique,” and it continues, “Jesus said over the bread and wine of the eucharist: ‘This is my body. . . this is my blood. . . .’ What Christ declared is true, and this truth is fulfilled every time the eucharist is celebrated. The Church confesses Christ’s real, living and active presence in the eucharist. While Christ’s real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required” (#13). It is the Holy Spirit who “makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal” (#14). The bread and wine “become the sacramental signs of Christ’s body and blood” and “remain so for the purpose of communion” (#15).

Commentary sidebars to the text note variation among churches on belief in the real presence, some churches linking it definitely with the becoming of the bread and wine while others do not (#C13), some asserting a change of the bread and wine “wrought by the Holy Spirit and Christ’s words” while others develop just enough of an explanation of the real presence to protect it from “damaging interpretations” (#C15). Sharing in the one bread and the common cup puts sharers in communion “with Christ and their fellow sharers in all times and places” (#19) and gives a vision and foretaste of the “divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation” (#22).

All of us realize the significant achievement represented by this multilateral statement of agreement published twenty-three years ago. Unlike other documents, the statements in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry received widespread response from the churches, who were asked for their reactions to these agreements. The Roman Catholic Church’s response included positive and critical components. It recognizes Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry as a significant result of the ecumenical movement and praises it for the

broad perspective it presents, its use of biblical, patristic, and liturgical sources, its trinitarian, christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological perspectives.<sup>7</sup> The response agrees with the understanding of memorial as a key to the relation between Christ's paschal sacrifice and the eucharist, but it asks for a deeper formulation of how the Church's self-offering is caught up in Christ's self-offering. It also points out that, "for Catholic doctrine, the conversion of the elements is a matter of faith and is only open to possible new theological explanation as to the 'how' of the intrinsic change. The content of the word 'transubstantiation' ought to be expressed without ambiguity."<sup>8</sup> On some points, it concludes, the agreement does not say enough "to respect the fulness of Christian faith," but the response recognizes the significance of what was in fact achieved by Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry.<sup>9</sup>

The fourth document, the agreement "Eucharistic Doctrine" by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission [ARCIC], represents a significant step forward on many issues.<sup>10</sup> Finalized in 1971 and published as part of The Final Report in 1982, "Eucharistic Doctrine" focuses primarily on areas of disagreement between Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Like the other three statements, the ARCIC agreement emphasizes that Christ's death on the cross cannot be repeated or added to what was accomplished once for all (#5). "Yet," it continues, "God has given the eucharist to his Church as a means through which the atoning work of Christ on the cross is proclaimed and made effective in the life of the Church" (#5). Using the notion of memorial as understood in the passover celebration of Christ's time, the ARCIC agreement says that the "eucharistic memorial is no mere calling to mind of a past event or of its significance, but the Church's effectual proclamation of God's mighty acts. . . . In the eucharistic prayer the church continues to make a perpetual memorial of Christ's death, and his members, united with God and one another, give thanks for all his mercies, entreat the benefits of his passion on behalf of the whole Church, participate in these benefits and enter into the movement of his self-offering" (#5). Turning to the question of Christ's presence in the eucharist, the ARCIC statement affirms "his true presence, signified by the bread and wine which, in this mystery, become his body and blood" (#6). His real presence can only be understood "within the context of the redemptive activity whereby he give himself, and in himself reconciliation, peace and life, to his own" (#6). A footnote explains that the word transubstantiation should be understood "as affirming the fact of Christ's presence and of the mysterious and radical change which takes place," rather than an explanation of how the change takes place (#6, n. 2).

Christ is present and active in various ways in the whole eucharistic celebration (#7), and his "sacramental body and blood are present as an offering to the believer awaiting his welcome" (#8). While Christ's presence does not depend on the believer's faith to be "the real gift of himself to his Church," with faith it becomes a presence not just "for the believer, but also a presence with him" (#8). The gift of Christ's body and blood are present and given "in order that, receiving them, believers may be united in communion with Christ the Lord" (#9). By the transforming action of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet, "elements of the first creation become pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth" (#11).



This very short document is extremely dense, and questions arose after its first publication that ARCIC answers in its “Elucidation” of 1979, also published in The Final Report. There ARCIC again claims substantial agreement on the eucharist and defends its use of the scholarship on memorial (anamnesis), reemphasizing that there is one unrepeatable sacrifice by Christ “but that the eucharist is a sacrifice in the sacramental sense” (Euch. Doc. Eluc. #5). The Church is active in this celebration, but this action is the fruit of Christ’s sacrifice and so adds nothing to its efficacy. In explaining that the understanding of the change in the elements is not a material change, the ARCIC “Elucidations” is very clear: “Becoming does not here imply material change. Nor does the liturgical use of the word imply that the bread and wine become Christ’s body and blood in such a way that in the eucharistic celebrations his presence is limited to the consecrated elements. It does not imply that Christ becomes present in the eucharist in the same manner that he was present in his earthly life. It does not imply that this becoming follows the physical laws of this world. What is here affirmed is a sacramental presence in which God uses realities of this world to convey the realities of the new creation: bread for this life becomes the bread of eternal life. Before the eucharistic prayer, to the question: ‘What is that?’, the believer answers: ‘It is bread.’ After the eucharistic prayer, to the same question he answers: ‘It is truly the body of Christ, the Bread of Life’ (Euch. Doc. Eluc. #6). Finally, the “Elucidations” notes that communion given to the sick or absent after the eucharistic celebration can be understood “as an extension of that celebration”. Eucharistic adoration should also be seen in this way, and “any dissociation of such devotion from this primary purpose, which is communion in Christ of all his members, is a distortion in eucharistic practice” (Euch. Doc. Eluc. #8).

The ARCIC agreement on the eucharist also received a number of official Roman Catholic responses. In 1982 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a first set of “Observations” with criticisms of the document’s discussion on the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist, the real presence and eucharistic adoration.<sup>11</sup> In response, some episcopal conferences published their reactions to ARCIC’s work. Many of these responses were more positive than the 1982 “Observations.” The Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, for example, are positive about the use of anamnesis.<sup>12</sup> They find the treatment of sacrifice “a true expression of Catholic faith” (#14) and the treatment of Christ’s real presence “an expression of Catholic faith” as well (#15). The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops also is pleased with ARCIC’s work on the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist and find that “it clearly states the central belief in the true and real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements . . . .”<sup>13</sup> They find discussion on the adoration of Christ in the reserved sacrament “consonant with our belief and with . . . Trent,” and find “the distinction between doctrine and practice . . . especially pertinent in this area.”<sup>14</sup>

The official response from the Roman Catholic Church to ARCIC appeared in 1991, the work of both the CDF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.<sup>15</sup> While it rejoices in the progress achieved, the response wants it clear that “in the eucharist, the Church ... makes present the sacrifice of Calvary” while not repeating it, and has a “propitiatory nature” which “can be applied also to the deceased”(#21). The discussion of the real presence is found “insufficient . . . to remove all ambiguity

regarding the mode of real presence” (#22). In response to this 1991 document, ARCIC presented further comments in 1993, explaining that “the belief that the eucharist is truly a sacrifice, but in a sacramental way, is part of the eucharistic faith of both our communions.”<sup>16</sup> ARCIC uses Anglican liturgical texts to illustrate both this point and the propitiatory dimension of the eucharistic prayer. ARCIC explains that it wished to express what Trent intended by the use of transubstantiation. Finally, ARCIC argues that the real problem in regard to reservation of the sacrament and adoration is not with simple reservation, nor with the attitude of reverence shown by both Anglicans and Roman Catholics to the reserved sacrament, but to some devotional practices in the Western church since the twelfth century. But ARCIC finds that the lack of such practices means no denial of the real presence, since “to this day these devotions are not practised in the Eastern Churches” who nevertheless believe in Christ’s real presence in the eucharist.<sup>17</sup> In response to this last set of clarifications, Edward Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, wrote that “no further study would seem to be required at this stage.”<sup>18</sup>

The amount of agreement reached in these four ecumenical statements is remarkable, and of course this represents only some of the ecumenical work done recently on the eucharist. When we add these statements to the biblical and liturgical scholarship on the eucharist, we see that the last century provided an unusually rich and productive discussion on the eucharist. We are now in a position to benefit from that heritage as we examine contemporary Roman Catholic understanding of the real presence of Christ in the eucharist.

## **II. Roman Catholic Understanding of the Presence**

### **of Christ in the Eucharist**

Today discussion of the presence of Christ also presupposes contemporary developments on sacrificial interpretations of the eucharist, so we will begin with these developments. “It is only within the movement of Christ’s sacrificial action, Christ giving himself to the Father, that the intelligibility of the Eucharistic Change can be adequately grounded,” points out Raymond Moloney.<sup>19</sup>

#### ***1. Sacrifice, Sacrament and Memorial***

Discussion of the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist has been deeply influenced by Western developments in the medieval and Reformation periods. While the Middle Ages probed deeply into the theological meaning of Christ’s presence in the eucharist, it offered little reflection on the its sacrificial interpretation. Instead, pious practices developed which emphasized new understandings of Christ’s sacrificial death and linked them to the eucharist. The emphasis was on the passion of Christ, so that the celebration of the eucharist was popularly taken to be a kind of allegory of the passion, even “a notion that the best theology of the time would disown, namely that the Mass was a repetition of the cross.”<sup>20</sup> In addition, the practice of “private” Masses, stipends and the offering of Masses for the intentions of donors, including for the dead, “made the

eucharistic sacrifice a central component of Catholic piety.”<sup>21</sup> Following Martin Luther, the Reformers of the sixteenth century rejected these practices and the theological interpretations that had accompanied them. For them, calling the Mass a sacrifice made it into a “work” rejected by their theology of God’s grace, and they emphasized that the eucharist was not a repetition but a memorial of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Their understanding of memorial, however, tended to be a mental recall, not the biblical interpretation of anamnesis characterizing contemporary theology.

To counteract the Reformers, the Council of Trent taught that the Mass is a sacrifice in a true and proper sense and not just “a bare commemoration” (DS 1753). It also said that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, though offered in a different manner (D.S.1743).

Jean-Marie Tillard, so important in the history of our dialogue, acknowledged readily that Trent’s teaching on the Mass “ran the serious risk of making it appear to be something added on to the historical Sacrifice and of bestowing on it a degree of autonomy in regard to this Sacrifice. This happened,” he explains, “despite the efforts of Trent to show that there is no contradiction between the epaphax [once for all] of the Cross and the sacrificial character of the Mass”<sup>22</sup> While Trent does not say that the sacrifice of the cross is repeated, reiterated, or renewed in the eucharistic sacrifice, it is undeveloped in its thinking, Tillard argues. Affirming that Christ offered himself once and for all in a bloody way on the cross, Trent teaches that the same Christ is contained and immolated in a nonbloody way in the Mass. It is the same victim, the only difference is in the manner of the offering (DS 1743).”One certainly gets the impression that there are two oblations, one bloody, the other unbloody . . . ,” comments Tillard.<sup>23</sup> Post-Tridentine interpretations “hardened” the Council’s teaching, giving the impression of a new oblation at the Mass.<sup>24</sup> “There was no conceptual tool which allowed the radical epaphax of the oblation itself to be held together with its perpetual presence in sacramental form.”<sup>25</sup>

But the concept of memorial (anamnesis) as it developed in contemporary exegetical and ecumenical discussion provided this tool, Tillard argued, and so he welcomed its use.<sup>26</sup> Rather than memorial as mental recall, the idea of memorial in the Old Testament and the New Testament evokes a more dynamic understanding. In such a memorial, the events of God’s acts in the past are recalled as they are on the night of Passover so as to become effective and fruitful in the present as well. It was this meaning of memorial that Jesus used and deepened when he said, “Do this in memory of me.” The eucharist as the “Church’s effective proclamation of God’s mighty acts and promises,”<sup>27</sup> to use the language of “Eucharist” from the Lima text, is the memorial of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross to which Christ in the power of the Spirit “unites his people with himself in a sacramental way so that the Church enters into the moment of his self-offering,” to use ARCIC.<sup>28</sup> Tillard notes that the sacrifice by Christ is one of expiation and redemption, and it is this salvific work that is celebrated in the memorial of the eucharist. Yet this happens just at the moment that the Church is offering its praise and thanksgiving to God for all the marvels of redemption. “In this way two meanings of ‘sacrifice’ are interwoven into the idea of memorial,” Tillard explains, “the first referring

back to the historic ephapax of Christ, the second relating to the ever new reaction of the Church.”<sup>29</sup>

Tillard argues that the discussion Trent left unfinished reaches a greater maturity today through the use of a eucharistic theology of memorial, which he finds in Vatican II’s teaching on the liturgy and in its postconciliar liturgical texts.<sup>30</sup> We can see it at work as well in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which explains that in the Scriptures “memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men.”<sup>31</sup> In the New Testament, new meaning is added to the sense of memorial: “When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ’s Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice of Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present.”<sup>32</sup> The Catechism explains the sacrificial interpretation of Christ’s work in light of this idea of memorial, saying, “Because it is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice.”<sup>33</sup> To introduce a text from the Council of Trent, the Catechism explains that the eucharist is a sacrifice because it “re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit.” In addition, the Catechism adds, in the eucharist the Church unites itself to Christ’s intercession with the Father for all people. “The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value.”<sup>34</sup>

Linked to the development of deepened appreciation for the biblical meaning of memorial is the recovery of an enriched theology of sacrament. Illuminated by liturgical studies, theological understanding of sacrament places a strong valuation on symbolic action and the sign-character of the sacraments. Moloney notes that, for the patristic period, signs and reality are not opposed. “Signs not only signify what they symbolize but participate in the reality itself,” he comments.<sup>35</sup> Signs also disclose aspects of the mystery first hidden which cannot simply be captured by discourse. “By ‘sign’ or ‘image’ we mean. . . both the representation of a salvific reality and its mysterious and efficacious presence,” underlines Tillard in talking about sacramental sign.<sup>36</sup> The idea of a sacrament as a sign that effects what it signifies becomes more understandable in this perspective. Using this renewed sacramental theology, Roman Catholic theology today speaks of the eucharist as the “sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ.” Moloney says that this is the best way to understand the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist. “Sacraments effect what they signify,” he explains, “and as the eucharist is the sacramental sign of Christ in his death and resurrection, so it brings about the actuality of that sacrifice in a sacramental way in the liturgy.” He continues, “Tradition has found this expressed in a particular way in the eucharistic prayer, which is to be seen as, above all, a prayer of offering. It seals the union of our offering of our lives with Christ’s one great offering of his life, which we evoke in the central section of every eucharistic prayer. It is not a question of adding a new sacrifice to that of Christ, nor of asking for an historical repetition of the cross; but simply of the one great historical sacrifice of Christ becoming present now, not historically but sacramentally, so that we might make our own what was done once for all on our behalf.”<sup>37</sup> The language of “sacramental sacrifice” is also included in the Catechism<sup>38</sup> and Tillard cites Paul VI from his Credo, who declared,

“We believe that the Mass. . . is indeed the sacrifice of Calvary sacramentally realized on our altars.”<sup>39</sup>

To summarize, Roman Catholic theology today interprets the sacrificial aspect of the eucharist through the biblical understanding of memorial and the recovery of an enriched theology of sacrament. In addition to these widely shared perspectives, Roman Catholic theologians continue to explore different aspects of a sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist which, as we saw, Tillard thought was only faintly outlined at Trent.

Many Roman Catholic theologians underline the spiritualizing tendency in the Biblical tradition of sacrifice. After noting the many connotations of sacrifice, Robert Daly sees three phases of spiritualization, from the proper dispositions for offering material sacrifices, to the sufficiency of disposition, to the bodily self-giving of Christ.<sup>40</sup> He is worried about the indiscriminate use of “sacrifice” language today because contemporary understandings of it do not reflect biblical meanings.<sup>41</sup> Mary Collins has the same concern.<sup>42</sup> Moloney emphasizes the attitude with which Jesus went to the cross to illumine the meaning of sacrifice in the eucharist.<sup>43</sup> “Sacrifice is first a truth about life before it is a truth about ritual,” he emphasizes. “By his own manner of life and death, as well as by his words, Christ has asked us to understand our lives as a daily self-sacrifice for this same cause for which eventually he died. With this background it makes sense that the eucharist cannot be just banquet, resurrection and community. It must also incorporate the aspect of self-sacrifice, giving, dying, through which alone the kingdom and the community of the resurrection became possible.”<sup>44</sup> Like Moloney, René Girard emphasizes the importance of violence in interpreting the cross and hence the eucharist. Girard relates the violence of the cross to the struggle against violence today. He argues that the paschal mystery of Christ has unmasked and broken forever the alliance between the sacred and bloody violence. According to Girard, “Jesus unmask[s] and tears apart the mechanism of the scapegoat that canonizes violence, making himself innocent, the victim of all violence.”<sup>45</sup> Christ defeated violence, not by opposing it, but by suffering it “and laying bare its injustice and uselessness,” Girard believes. By resurrecting Christ from the dead, the Father declared once and for all where errors are found and where is the truth, thus making the eucharist the Father’s “no” to violence. The eucharist is the sacrament of nonviolence.

Edward Kilmartin is another Roman Catholic scholar who has focused on the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist. In his judgment, Western eucharistic theology represented a peculiar splinter tradition which lost a sense of the Eastern notion of the commemorative actual presence of the sacrifice of the cross. It also “lost a sense of the East’s notion of the dynamic nature of the eucharistic prayer and of its climax in communion.”<sup>46</sup> The focus on the words of institution led to the idea of the last supper as the first Mass and the priest as acting only in persona Christi, rather than also in persona ecclesiae. “Perhaps most unfortunate was the failure to recognize the role of the Spirit in the eucharist and the significance of the epiclesis for the meaning of the celebration,” he says.<sup>47</sup> Kilmartin understands self-offering as the fundamental understanding of the sacrifice of Christ, and he links this view to Trinitarian roots. “The Father offers the Son in the Spirit for the salvation of the world, and the human Jesus responds in the name of

all humanity in his self-offering of obedience and love to the Father. This comes to a climax in his death and resurrection.”<sup>48</sup> The Holy Spirit enables Christians to be joined in their self-offering to the self-offering of Christ. Their response can be called a sacrifice because it is an act of thanksgiving and of self-offering that is intentional, but it is always a response to God’s initiative and is enabled by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. Kilmartin represents the sacrificial tradition as self-offering.

Finally, David Power is another Roman Catholic scholar who has focussed extensively on the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist as a key to its understanding. He argues that sacrificial language should be taken seriously and can be illumined by anthropological studies. In an early article, Power argues that language of sacrifice applied to either Christ or the eucharist is metaphorical. He also worries that sacrificial offering language can obscure the fact that the “first giver in the Eucharist is God and that the gift which is celebrated is his gift to us of his Son’s flesh and blood.”<sup>49</sup> We may offer bread and wine to God, but our gift is completely transformed and returned to us as Christ’s very self offered to the Father for our salvation.

Power finds the contemporary discussion of memorial or sacramental sacrifice to be compatible with Trent’s teaching on the eucharist, and he also finds Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry’s identification of propitiation with intercession by Christ to be compatible with Trent.<sup>50</sup> But he thinks that Trent’s teaching on the presider of the eucharist has overemphasized sacrificial language and imagery; these should not be allowed to dominate the understanding of the presider’s role.<sup>51</sup> In a 1996 article, he thinks that “perhaps it is now time to see how an imagery more directly related to communion can actually replace sacrifice as key concept in eucharistic theology and catechesis.”<sup>52</sup> He suggests more attention be focused, not on our offering, but on God’s gift to us and table communion.

The range of discussions among Roman Catholic scholars on the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist dramatize Tillard’s point: that Trent’s work is being completed in contemporary discussion. They also throw light on the discussion of the presence of Christ.

## ***2. Presence, Communion, Adoration***

I started my discussion of the presence of Christ in the eucharist by focussing on the representation of the sacrifice of Christ. Because the eucharist is the sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ, effectively proclaimed there, he is present. But while contemporary theology incorporates this renewed thinking on sacrifice, it also focuses on other points, as exemplified by David Power. “If medieval scholastics focused on the words ‘this is my body’ as the form of the eucharist, contemporary liturgists remind us that Jesus also said: ‘take and eat’.”<sup>53</sup>

Again the medieval developments in the Western Church are important background for understanding contemporary emphases. Unlike the issue of sacrifice in the eucharist, the issue of Christ’s presence had received centuries of theological reflection in the West. I

think it is correct to find in the patristic tradition a consistent understanding that the bread and wine were changed or transformed at the celebration of the eucharist. Moloney cites the epiclesis, which prays that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, as evidence of the widespread and ancient character of this belief.<sup>54</sup> But by the ninth century, Paschase Radbert had developed a crudely realistic view of this change in the bread and wine, as though it were a physical or material change. Two centuries later, Berengar presented a symbolic understanding of the eucharist in which the gifts may be called the body and blood of Christ but in fact remain bread and wine. These positions stimulated controversies in their day, of course, but they also motivated theologians to try to explain the change in the eucharist more adequately. This was made more important by some superstitious practices of eucharistic piety, which saw faithful people claiming to see bleeding hosts or attempting to attend as many eucharistic consecrations as possible in one day to increase their share of grace. In addition, while reception of communion among the faithful became less frequent, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament outside the celebration of eucharist began to grow through exposition, processions, devotional prayers before the tabernacle where the reserved sacrament was kept, and eventually benediction.

Against superstitious practices and against both physicalist and reductionist-symbolic interpretations, theologians began to use the term “transubstantiation.” The meaning of this term was brought to some maturity by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. It is important to remember that Aquinas used the idea of transubstantiation as a means to counter superstition and to correct crude physicalist views of the eucharist, while maintaining an affirmation of the change inherited from the tradition and manifested by the epicletic prayer. Using the Aristotelian philosophy of interest to his contemporaries--and hence having an apologetic value--Aquinas argued that in the eucharist the substance of bread and wine--its “whatness”--changed into the body and blood of Christ, leaving only the “accidents” or appearances remaining. Because Aristotelian philosophy is less known today than it would have been in the thirteenth century, many contemporaries think that Aquinas was trying to explain how the change in the elements of bread and wine occurred. But in fact his explanation is really an unexplanation, or an anti-explanation: using a conceptual framework popular in his culture, Aquinas simply asserts that there is a change, not how. Here I think ARCIC was completely correct in seeing transubstantiation today “as affirming the fact of Christ’s presence and of the mysterious and radical change which takes place. . . . not. . . as explaining how the change takes place.”<sup>55</sup>

By the time of the Reformation, however, there was an increasing breakdown in a common understanding of eucharistic presence. Part of the reason for this breakdown was semantic drift, so that terms once understood in a common way were no longer interpreted in the same way. Just as today “substance” would have a materialist meaning--as in “substance abuse”--so in the sixteenth century its meaning was variously interpreted. We can see this clearly from a comment of Zwingli, who complained that Catholics believed that Christ was shut up inside a box rather than at the right hand of the Father. But it was precisely against such a physicalist view that the notion of transubstantiation had been developed. Similarly, Calvin complains about the view of

transubstantiation, explaining that Christ's presence is "spiritual," that is, "real." While the Reformation controversies about the eucharist had many causes, breakdown of common philosophical frameworks was one contributing factor.

While the Reformers developed a variety of ways to discuss Christ's presence in the eucharist, the Council of Trent reaffirmed transubstantiation as a "most apt" formulation and it defended the "true, real and substantial" presence of Christ against attempts to reduce it to a mere symbolic form or to combine Christ's presence with a remaining presence of bread and wine. While Trent made clear that the term and concept of "transubstantiation" need not be used in Catholic theology--it simply was "most apt"--it also intended to condemn terms or concepts that deny its meaning. Understood in this way, Trent's teaching remains a norm in Roman Catholic theology today.

Roman Catholic theology on the presence of Christ in the eucharist through the transformation of bread and wine at times lost sight of the other modes of presence of Christ at the eucharist and in the Church. Tillard speaks of the reification of the eucharist; Kilmartin complains that the preoccupation with the real presence of Christ led Roman Catholic theology to focus on the fact that the consecrated bread and wine have become Christ's body and blood, rather than on what Christ is doing through them. The patristic approach was more dynamic and included reference to the whole Christ and his saving work actively present through anamnesis.<sup>56</sup> The concern to broaden the discussion on the modes of Christ's presence at the eucharist is reflected in Vatican II's Decree on the Liturgy, which teaches that Christ is present at the eucharist in the presider, in the assembly when it prays and sings, in the reading of the Scriptures and "especially under the Eucharistic species."<sup>57</sup> This recovery of the many modes of Christ's presence in the eucharist is a standard point in contemporary Roman Catholic theology.

Joseph Komonchak points out that the term "body of Christ" until the medieval period meant the Church, while "the mystical body of Christ" referred to the eucharist. But after the medieval period their meanings were switched,<sup>58</sup> another indication of the intense focus on the presence of Christ in the transformed elements. Tillard emphasizes that there are "multiple facets of his presence," not many presences added to each other.<sup>59</sup> The presence of the Lord in the midst of his people, Tillard underlines, is the basis for his presence in the liturgical celebration. "It is the Lord at the right hand of the Father, the Lord outside the sacramental world, the glorified Christ, who gives in his Holy Spirit that intensity of presence in the bread and the cup. In no way does he leave heaven to come to earth."<sup>60</sup> Rather, acting through the Spirit, Christ "transforms the bread and wine of the earthly table so that they are drawn to the totality of his mystery and become themselves somehow bearers of the same mystery," Tillard writes,<sup>61</sup> using the sacramental world "to conquer the distance which separates his glorious condition" from his brothers and sisters.<sup>62</sup>

Many Roman Catholic theologians today do not feel bound by the terminology or Aristotelian philosophy used by Aquinas to explain transubstantiation, and a few have tried to reformulate its meaning. Edward Schillebeeckx was one theologian who suggested "transignification" as a translation of Trent's meaning in a modern key. He



explained that the bread and wine become the subject of a new meaning by the power of Christ acting in the Church, signs of the real presence of Christ giving himself to his own.<sup>63</sup> Schillebeeckx' main concern in his suggestions was to underline the interpersonal significance of the eucharist and its transformative effects.<sup>64</sup> The suggestions by Schillebeeckx and other theologians discussing "transignification" or "transfinalization" were criticized by Pope Paul VI in Mysterium Fidei, and these terms are not used often today in contemporary Roman Catholic eucharistic theology. But some theologians use insights from this discussion to explain the teaching of Trent. Moloney asks what the gifts of bread and wine mean, and he explains that they become signs of Christ's self-giving and the way he gives, that is, totally. "Total self-giving is the key to the meaning of the eucharist," he continues. "Total self-giving on the stage of human history meant Christ's death on the cross. Total self-giving in the world of sacramental signs means the change of the bread and wine into Christ's very self. Nothing else will do!"<sup>65</sup> While David Power is happy with the increased use of narrative, blessings, and poetic imagery as the basic form for discussing the eucharist, he nevertheless appeals to the continuing need for ontological language to interpret the meaning of the eucharist.<sup>66</sup>

In his interpretation of what Trent called "transubstantiation," Tillard avoids the use of philosophical language but maintains Trent's meaning. Tillard underlines that the presence of Christ in the eucharist is by sign, a sacramental mode of presence, not a natural mode of presence. "What Trent is condemning. . . is the minimalist position which reduces this 'sacramental mode of existence' to a sign-function void of content which disregards the fact that in the sacramental economy the sign is itself the bearer of the mysterious presence of the very thing it signifies. When the Church celebrates the memorial, the paschal humanity of the Lord is truly brought into its midst. It does not become present like something merely called to mind, or merely in its effects. It is the paschal humanity itself which is present." Tillard continues, "But, having asserted that, we must immediately stress that it is present in a manner which does not pertain to the natural order of things, yet the purpose of this presence is specifically to communicate with the natural order."<sup>67</sup> In the eucharist is given "the fundamental reality of the Lord's Body," Tillard continues, but "brought about in a special and mysterious way." Thus with the term "transubstantiation" Trent had the "intention not only of safeguarding the reality and totality of the presence but also of counteracting grossly materialistic or 'physicist' interpretations of it."<sup>68</sup> This is highlighted by the fact that what is given is the body and blood of the risen, glorified Lord now present as Lord of creation by the power of the Spirit. In the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit transfers possession of the bread and wine of the created order so that they now belong to the Lord of the new heaven and new earth, "who thus inaugurates the dawning of the first fruits of the Last Age in and through the first creation."<sup>69</sup>

"The truth which the Roman Catholic Church is intent on serving, defending and clarifying is the conversio mirabilis (wonderful conversion) and only indirectly the manner of that conversion," Tillard explains.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, he continues, the purpose of insisting on the conversio is to vindicate the realism of the presence.<sup>71</sup> In his mature thought, Aquinas uses the term conversio much more than transubstantiation, underlining the basic goal of his thought on transubstantiation. In conclusion, Tillard writes, "the

Tridentine affirmation regarding transubstantiation . . . is precisely directed to safeguarding what we have called the focal point of the traditional affirmation of faith: the bread and cup of created nature become, in very truth, but in mystery, through the power of the Spirit, the Body of him who in his Passover was made Lord of creation and of history. It belongs to each church tradition to interpret this in the line of its own systems and insights.”<sup>72</sup>

Tillard emphasizes that “the eucharist is fully realized in that encounter between the gift offered by the Lord and the response of faith made by the true believer.”<sup>73</sup> To counter a one-sided emphasis in Roman Catholic theology, Tillard argues that the eucharist celebrates the covenant between Christ and the believer. “In a sense, the eucharistic presence needs me to become complete presence by means of the Holy Spirit I possess,” he argues.<sup>74</sup> “Thus by the Eucharist, the church becomes the presence of Christ in the world!”<sup>75</sup> In a sense, he explains, “the sacramental Body and Blood. . . are a presence-that-is-professed, awaiting the welcoming response of the believer.”<sup>76</sup> While the presence of Christ is there in the bread and wine which have been transformed, “at that level alone...his presence is lacking something. It is but an offered presence; we have not yet made of it the source of an interpersonal encounter.”<sup>77</sup>

Tillard thinks that it is important to hold together these two moments in reflecting on the presence of Christ in the eucharist. On the one hand, Roman Catholics have insisted on the “objective presence” of Christ in the eucharist, underlining a point which Protestants and Anglicans today welcome: the prevenient action of God, so that “everything here is based on the movement of God to man [sic].”<sup>78</sup> At the same time, Roman Catholics agree that the presence of Christ is oriented toward a second moment, the reception of communion by the believer. Emphasis on this second moment within the eucharistic celebration has been emphasized by some Anglicans and Protestants, but this emphasis also characterizes Roman Catholic theology and practice today. Kilmartin agrees that communion is an essential part of the eucharistic sacrifice and cannot be relegated “to the status of an almost dispensable supplement.”<sup>79</sup> Power goes further than this by calling the sharing in the table “the central act of the liturgy.”<sup>80</sup> Communion is the place where the main sacramental representation of the paschal mystery is presented. Without necessarily sharing this approach, Roman Catholic theology today generally recognizes that “the medieval focus on consecration rather than communion was unfortunate and led to distortions in both understanding and practice.”<sup>81</sup>

A last point related to the presence of Christ in the eucharist is the reservation of the consecrated elements after the celebration. In the second century, deacons took communion to the sick and others unable to attend the Sunday eucharistic celebration. In official Roman Catholic liturgical guidelines, the primary reason for reservation of consecrated elements is still understood to be communion for the sick and dying, while secondary purposes are distribution of communion outside of the celebration and adoration of Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>82</sup> But even the adoration of Christ in the reserved sacrament should be understood as an extension of the sacramental action of the celebration of eucharist and has the purpose of sacramental and spiritual communion.<sup>83</sup> The popular devotions linked with the reserved sacrament which

developed in the West in the medieval period can be understood partly “as a compensation for the decline in the active participation in the liturgy itself,” Moloney thinks, but also as an indication of the medieval devotion to the Lord’s humanity and to the development of certain contemplative traditions of prayer.<sup>84</sup> Eucharistic devotional practices today are understood as an extension of the eucharistic celebration by the community.

Contemporary Roman Catholic theology on eucharistic presence has been enriched by the reappropriation of a broader framework for understanding. This has contributed to a more dynamic and serene sense of the topic.

### **Conclusion**

Many additional themes characterize Roman Catholic theology on the presence of Christ in the eucharist today, but we share these emphases with Disciples and other Christians and so I have not developed them here. The effects of the eucharist are one contemporary theme about which Christians have agreement. “The bread and wine are transformed so that we might be transformed,” said Benedict XVI at World Youth Day. The eucharist binds us into communion in Christ and so we are bound into communion with each other. Through the eucharist, we have communion with Christians throughout the world and through all the ages. The eucharist empowers us to bring justice and peace to a world starving for bread, and to serve as a sign of the breaking in of God’s kingdom to our world today. Thus the eucharist also gives us a foretaste of the age to come with all of its joys. On all of these themes we have not divided so deeply.

But in this paper I have tried to focus on an area of important division between us, the understanding of the presence of Christ in the eucharist. To do this, I first highlighted theological implications of recent biblical and liturgical scholarship, as well as the progress of four important agreed statements on the eucharist. Then I presented an understanding of contemporary Roman Catholic teaching on the presence of Christ in the eucharist, beginning with the sacrificial interpretation of the sacrament and then following with direct discussion of the understanding of Christ’s presence. Throughout this paper, I have tried to show the wider contexts into which eucharistic presence is understood today by Roman Catholics. May my words serve the day when Disciples and Roman Catholics will come into full, visible, sacramental communion, for which I pray.

Margaret O’Gara

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I discuss Old Testament texts only indirectly.

<sup>2</sup> Donovan, 1/33.

<sup>3</sup> Donovan, 2/35.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, “The Eucharist as Sacrifice,” in Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue I-III, edited by Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, [1967]). Because of the extensive quotations required from agreed statements, I give only one footnote at the start of a discussion of each agreed statement, and then indicate the source for quotations within the body of the paper.

<sup>5</sup> Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission, “The Lord’s Supper [“Das Herrenmahl”] in Growth in Agreement, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, Ecumenical Documents II (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press & Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 190-214.

<sup>6</sup> World Council of Churches, “Eucharist,” in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), pp. 10-17.

<sup>7</sup> Max Thurian, ed., The Churches Respond to BEM, 6 vols. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986-88), 6:1-40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, “Eucharistic Doctrine,” in The Final Report (London: SPCK & Catholic Truth Society, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> This and other official Anglican and Roman Catholic responses to the The Final Report can be found in Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity, ed. Christopher Hill and E.J. Yarnold (London: SPCK & Catholic Truth Society, 1994); for The “Observations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Final Report of ARCIC I,” see 79-91.

<sup>12</sup> “Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I by the Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales (1985),” in Anglican and Catholics: The Search for Unity, pp. 94-110.

<sup>13</sup> Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Response of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to the ARCIC-I ‘Final Report’,” Ecumenism (Dec. 1987), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> “The Official Response of the Roman Catholic Church to the Final Report of ARCIC I,” in Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity, pp. 156-66.

<sup>16</sup> ARCIC, “Requested Clarifications on Eucharist and Ministry,” in Anglicans and Catholics: The Search for Unity, p. 199.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Cassidy [PCPCU] to Mark Santer and Cormac Murphy-O’Connor [ARCIC Cochairs], 1994, in Anglican and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity, p. 207.

<sup>19</sup> Moloney, 226, cited by Donovan, 4/12-13.

<sup>20</sup> Raymond Moloney, "Eucharist," New Theological Dictionary (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), p. 348.

<sup>21</sup> Donovan, 4/1.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Marie Tillard, "Sacrificial Terminology and the Eucharist," One in Christ 17 (1981): 306.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> World Council of Churches, "Eucharist," #7.

<sup>28</sup> ARCIC, "Elucidation: Eucharistic Doctrine," #5.

<sup>29</sup> Tillard, "Roman Catholics and Anglicans: The Eucharist," p. 149.

<sup>30</sup> Tillard, pp. 320-23.

<sup>31</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2d edition (Strathfield, NSW, Australia: St. Pauls Publications, 2000), #1363.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, #1364.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, #1365.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, #1368.

<sup>35</sup> Moloney, p. 347.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Marie Tillard, "Roman Catholics and Anglicans: The Eucharist," One in Christ 9 (1973): 138.

<sup>37</sup> Moloney, p. 353.

<sup>38</sup> Catechism, subheading at #1356.

<sup>39</sup> Paul VI, AAS 60, 1968, 442, cited in Tillard, "Sacrificial Terminology and the Eucharist," p. 321.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Daly, "Sacrifice," in New Dictionary of Theology, p. 924-25.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 925.

<sup>42</sup> Donovan, 4/23.

<sup>43</sup> Donovan, 4/12.

<sup>44</sup> Moloney, 353.

<sup>45</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa, “Eucharist Is ‘God’s Absolute “No” to Violence,’” preacher to the papal household citing René Girard in his third Lenten meditation, 11 March 2005, Vatican City, <http://bridgefolk.net>, accessed 19 November 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Donovan, discussing Edward Kilmartin’s work on 4/19.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> David Power, “Words that Crack: The Uses of ‘Sacrifice’ in Eucharistic Discourse,” Worship 53 (1979): 402.

<sup>50</sup> Donovan, 4/25.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



<sup>52</sup> David Power, "Roman Catholic Theologies of Eucharistic Communion: A Contribution to Ecumenical Conversation," Theological Studies 57 (1996): 597.

<sup>53</sup> Donovan, 5/1.

<sup>54</sup> Moloney, p. 347.

<sup>55</sup> ARCIC, "Eucharistic Doctrine," #6, footnote 2.

<sup>56</sup> Edward Kilmartin, Eucharist in the West, cited by Donovan, 5/11.

<sup>57</sup> Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, in Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter Abbott (New York: America Press, 1966), #7.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Komonchak, "Contributions of Bernard Lonergan to Ecclesiology," Regis College, Toronto, 4 November 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Jean-Marie Tillard, "Reflection on the Real Presence and Encountering the Lord in the Eucharist," Emmanuel 8 (1975): 110.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>63</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, The Eucharist (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

<sup>64</sup> Donovan, 5/13.

<sup>65</sup> Moloney, p. 354.

<sup>66</sup> David Power is cited by Donovan, 5/18.

<sup>67</sup> Tillard, "Anglican and Roman Catholics: The Eucharist," p. 160.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 173-74.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>73</sup> Tillard, "Reflection on the Real Presence and Encountering the Lord in the Eucharist," p. 160.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>78</sup> Tillard, “Roman Catholic and Anglicans: The Eucharist,” p. 167.

<sup>79</sup> Kilmartin, Eucharist in the West, 380, cited by Donovan, 5/20.

<sup>80</sup> Power, Eucharistic Mystery, 293, cited in Donovan, 5/20.

<sup>81</sup> Donovan, 5/22.

<sup>82</sup> Donovan, citing Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction Eucharisticum Mysterium, 5/24.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>84</sup> Moloney, p. 347.