

They Recognized Him in the Breaking of the Bread  
An Understanding of the Experience of Eucharist  
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## They Recognized Him in the Breaking of the Bread An Understanding of the Experience of Eucharist

It was later in the day, two followers of Jesus were walking from Jerusalem to their village, Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)<sup>1</sup>. They were discussing all that had occurred over the past several days. Jesus, their rabbi, their prophet had been crucified. They did not know that the man who joined them as they walked was Jesus. Jesus asked them what they are talking about. Cleopas is startled to hear that this stranger has no clue about all that occurred in Jerusalem the past few days so he proceeds to tell about how Jesus was a “prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (24:19), how he died and how hopeful they had been that this was the man who would “redeem Israel”. This wasn’t the end of the story however, because just that morning women went to Jesus’ tomb and did not find his body there. The women saw angels who told them that Jesus was alive. As they continued to walk together, Jesus talks with them making connections in the scriptures concerning the Messiah and Jesus. When they arrived at Emmaus, they invite Jesus to join them for dinner. It was when Jesus was at the table with them after he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them that “their eyes were opened and they recognized him.” (24:31) Jesus, in an instant, “vanished from their sight” (24:31). Those with him in that moment had a profound experience. Jesus was with them. He was alive. They quickly got up and returned to Jerusalem to share their experience of the risen Jesus and how he made himself known to them in the breaking of the bread. How is it that we recognize Jesus? Is it in the breaking of the bread of Eucharist or in the community gathered or in the Word of God that we hear or in our private prayers? Perhaps it is at different times all of these.

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<sup>1</sup> NRSV

In this essay, I will trace several significant theological developments concerning Eucharist as a liturgical celebration. We believe that the Risen Christ is present whenever we celebrate the eucharistic liturgy but that belief has been recognized in different ways throughout Christian history. When we proclaim the “mystery of faith” – Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again – we not only recall two past events, the death and resurrection of Christ and Christ’s glory in the future, but we also proclaim Christ’s presence for us today, the invitation we each have to take part in the progressive sacred history.

### Sacred History – A Gift from the Jewish Tradition

One of the gifts that we, as Christians, share with the people of Israel is an appreciation for sacred history. Jews and Christians have our own way of living this history because we see God’s presence throughout it. The main events in sacred history are Creation, when God calls Abraham into a relationship and forms through him a chosen people, Moses’ call to help free the chosen people of Israel from slavery in the Exodus, the Incarnation of the Son of God in the midst of these chosen people, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and, we anticipate a time yet to come when God will be all in all called parousia. The people of God believe God leads them through events pertinent to their lives. As Dr. Martos writes in Doors to the Sacred:

“It was a sacred history, filled with stories that put them in the presence of the most sacred meanings that they knew as a people: that the world was good, that it is human sinfulness that disrupts the harmony of life, that people could and should be open to the call of the transcendent, that slavery is inhuman and freedom is to be cherished, that justice and law are important but ultimately mercy and love are more important, that it is possible to be chosen and loved despite one’s mistakes and failures.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Martos, Doors to the Sacred, (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph,2001),20.

The events that made up Israel's history offered revelations about themselves and the world in which they lived that they saw could not be only from human hands. They came to realize their interactions had to go beyond the natural world to the supernatural world, to God. It is within this context that we also live as a people of God - in the events of biblical history. We, too, realize that we connect to the supernatural world of God. These events can begin in the humblest and most common settings, like a meal.

### Jesus and Meals

Jesus knew the importance of a good meal in the company of friends. Jesus often ate meals with his followers, his disciples, but he also chose to have table fellowship with social outcasts. Meal fellowship for the Jewish community served as a sign of thanksgiving to a gracious Creator and Redeemer<sup>3</sup> as it was an important custom of the people of Israel. Certain rules developed for who one could eat and not eat with, depending upon who was clean or unclean. Jesus would sometimes use the occasion of meals and the rules required of them to confront religious authorities and he would also use meals as a setting for acts of compassion, acceptance, and mercy for those who were marginalized or rejected from the community. Through these meals, Jesus demonstrated that more than one's physical needs were being met. A spiritual hunger was being fulfilled as well. Jesus used meals for much of his teaching about the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps they even foreshadowed his presence in Eucharist<sup>5</sup>.

Jesus inaugurated a new covenant by taking bread and wine at his last supper and infusing them with a new level of meaning. Why was it necessary for Jesus in this last meal with

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *A Holy Meal, The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God*, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Gordon Smith in *A Holy Meal* references the work of Geoffrey Wainwright's *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) concerning this idea of the foreshadowing of the Eucharist in the meals of Jesus' ministry.

his disciples to proclaim that the bread and the wine were his body and blood? In the Gospel of Luke, we find Jesus telling his disciples that he “eagerly desired to eat this Passover with” (Luke 22:15) them before he suffers and that such a meal will not be eaten again until the kingdom of God comes. This wasn’t the first time the followers heard about the kingdom of God. Jesus had been telling them what it was like in many parables throughout his ministry.

The account of the Last Supper in Luke connects it to Passover. Although still debated among scholars, many believe that the Last Supper takes place as part of a Passover meal. This was considered the most important ritual meal as it was a re-enactment of the sacred events of freeing the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. For devout Jews the Passover supper not only commemorated the past but also made it present:

“It enabled them to reenter those past events and to experience vividly the meaning of their salvation. And it made the God of Israel present to them in a fuller and richer way than their ordinary awareness of God’s presence.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus entered this Passover meal with his disciples on the eve of his death and resurrection and deepened this sacred meal by taking the bread and announcing that this was his body. Then he took a cup of wine and announced that it would be poured out as the new covenant:

“He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’ (Luke 22: 15-20).

It was this experience that Jesus’ followers recalled when they encountered the risen Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph, 2001), 213.

With each resurrection appearances to his followers, they learned something more about the risen Jesus. In order to make sense of their experience, they started making connections to that moment when he shared the last supper with them and to other scriptures pointing to the Messiah. At Pentecost they were filled with a new spirit from God giving them an exuberance and courage to proclaim all that they witnessed about Jesus. Through this experience they realized that they could be messengers of this good news and key to bringing that spirit to others. God gave them the same kind of interior spirit that was given to Jesus. Communities formed from this foundational Good News of Jesus initially led by disciples.

Luke Timothy Johnson in his book, Religious Experience in Early Christianity notes that the New Testament “contains an impressive amount of experiential language” which refers to or argues from human experiences.<sup>7</sup> Johnson also acknowledges how difficult it is to define or analyze such experience and yet one cannot ignore reading the New Testament at length without realizing that something transformative is happening to the people of this time. They express a power but Johnson says it is a “peculiar sort of power”. “It is a power that comes from outside those touched by it and is transmitted to them from another, to whom it properly belongs. The power transmitted to them reaches external expression in various “wonders and signs”. It also is said to be at work in the internal transformation of human freedom.”<sup>8</sup> Johnson says that the only way to describe this amazing combination of characteristics associated with this power is to call it ‘transcendent’ which means “going beyond” enabling a most “intense intimacy and communication.”<sup>9</sup> He calls this a function of the spirit.

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<sup>7</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experiences in Early Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

## Early Christian Communities

It is through the writings of Paul particularly to the Corinthian community that we have the first clear focus on eucharist. This dates around 53-54 CE. For Paul there is an interrelationship between the community and how they celebrate eucharist. “Unity with Jesus by the community is Paul’s urgent call, since Jesus in the eucharist wants to be united to the community. The first extant writing that the Christian church can claim focuses strongly on the unity of Jesus with a community of his followers as they celebrate the eucharist.”<sup>10</sup> The Jewish – Christian believers developed “Jesus communities”<sup>11</sup> who gathered to celebrate communal meals. It is in the community remembering Jesus’ command to take bread and wine that they understand the presence of the risen Christ. This was more than a remembrance of Jesus’ life, death or resurrection. Those with Jewish backgrounds saw connections from their own tradition to explain what the bread and wine with Jesus’ words and actions at the Last Supper meant.

In the early years of Christianity those who participated in these communal meals realized that they were engaged by “a power that was truly Other.”<sup>12</sup> The sense of *koinonia* (or fellowship) that is built into the very experience of sharing food gives a sense of participation in a reality larger than the individual.<sup>13</sup> Paul uses the Greek word, *koinonia*, meaning ‘that which is in common’ in reference to the Lord’s Supper or the relationship that believers have with Christ.<sup>14</sup> As Johnson points out, Paul and his readers agreed upon certain convictions. They believed that when they gathered ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’ (I Cor 5:4) they were also in the presence of ‘the power of the Lord Jesus’. They believed that the cup of blessing that they shared

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<sup>10</sup> Kenan B. Osborne, *Community, Eucharist, and Spirituality*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 2007), 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Early Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 164.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>14</sup> David Noel Freeman Ed, *Dictionary of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 460.

was a koinonia in the body of Christ just as it was a cup of blessing in the blood of Christ. When they came together for such a meal in the name of Jesus, the power of the risen Christ was with them. “Their eating and drinking was, therefore, of ‘supernatural food and supernatural drink.’”<sup>15</sup>

#### Early Church and the Eucharist, approximately 100-500 CE

The term for ‘early church’ begins with the non-New Testament writers.<sup>16</sup> Kenan Osborne in his book Community, Eucharist, and Spirituality notes that at the beginning of the early church, the presider of eucharistic celebrations was not limited to a specific individual like a bishop or a priest.<sup>17</sup> The naming of church leadership with bishop, priest, and deacon was not common until the end of the third century.<sup>18</sup> Even then the roles of these individuals evolved differently for the needs of growing church communities. As the church grew during these first centuries, communal meals became more ritualized as a form of worship. “By the end of the first century, Christians were beginning to relate the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper directly to the bread and wine used in the ritual meal.”<sup>19</sup> Prayers followed the pattern of earlier Jewish thanksgiving prayers. The only set prayers were those of the words of institution. The basic pattern included gift offerings of bread and wine with a thanksgiving prayer over these gifts followed by the breaking of the bread. Everyone present would then receive the bread and wine. The prayers that were offered were directed to the Father in thanksgiving for God’s gifts and especially for the redemption brought by Christ.<sup>20</sup> During this early period of Christianity, the eucharist was a “sacramental experience of communal worship offered in the presence of Christ

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<sup>15</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Early Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 174.

<sup>16</sup> Kenan Osborne, *Community, Eucharist and Spirituality*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 2007), 37.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph, 2001), 217.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

who they believed became present as the community prayed and worshipped together. And what made the bread and wine sacred was the entire ritual action which repeated and commemorated what Christ had done at his last supper.”<sup>21</sup>

From the fourth to the sixth centuries the celebration of the eucharist became a more elaborate liturgical ceremony. When Constantine lifted the legal ban on Christian worship in 313, Christians were allowed to worship freely in public gatherings. It was the emperor after Constantine, Theodosius, who proclaimed Christianity the official religion of the Roman state in 380. This dramatically altered eucharistic worship as it became more of a function of the state.

One persistent view of the Lord’s Supper that actually developed early in the Jewish-Christian communities was an understanding of Jesus’ crucifixion as a sacrificial death offered to God. They also looked at the meal as a commemoration of his resurrection – a triumph over death. The close connection to the feast of Passover and the sacrifice of the paschal lamb made it possible to consider Jesus as the paschal lamb so the eucharist was seen as a sacrificial meal. Eucharist was atonement for sin rather than a shared offering of thanksgiving. Christ was a victim sacrificed for the salvation of all and those who participated in the liturgy were, in a mystical way, being united with Christ for the purpose of being redeemed from sin and being brought in union with God.

The church fathers by the middle of the fourth century gave the greatest attention in their writings to an understanding of the divine presence and the holy sacrifice. The bread and the wine became identified with Christ and Christ as God, which made fewer people want to receive communion. They did not feel worthy or want “to risk direct contact with the creator and judge of the universe.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 224.

The prayers used for the Eucharistic liturgy along with any directions for reciting them were written down causing the character of the worship to change. Instead of being a spontaneous expression of worship the liturgy became a stately ritual of recited prayers. Despite this and the additional formality that they brought, the liturgy still had the power to awaken in participants a sense of the sacred and an experience of divine presence.<sup>23</sup> The question arose, “at what moment in the liturgy did Christ become experientially present?”<sup>24</sup> This was something that the early church fathers had not defined as they saw Christ present in the whole eucharistic celebration. As the liturgy developed and included prayers prior to the distribution of communion, Christ’s presence was connected to the eucharistic prayer beginning with the offering of bread and wine to God. The body and blood of Christ after the consecration was experienced as a mystical reality a cause of unity between Christ and the church.

However, differences also grew between eastern Christianity and western Christianity. In the east the eucharistic prayer over the bread and wine became “such an awe-inspiring ritual that it had to be performed in profound silence.”<sup>25</sup> In the west, the church responded to Arianism and the identification of Christ with God which led them to talk about the actual presence of God in the eucharist.<sup>26</sup> Augustine wrote that eucharist was not only to be received but also worshiped.<sup>27</sup> Although the eastern rite of the liturgy did not change too much after the sixth century, in the west eucharistic worship continued to evolve until the sixteenth century.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

## Eucharist in the Middle Ages

For over a thousand years, Christians believed in the real presence of Christ in the eucharist but during the Middle Ages, a sort of theological clarification occurred among theologians who wanted to give more of a scholastic understanding to eucharistic liturgy. The big questions for theologians were 1) at what point in the mass did the sacrifice take place and 2) how were the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ? The first Western theologian to write a treatise on eucharist was Paschasius Radbertus in the ninth century. He presented such a realistic approach to the moment of change in the eucharist that he was challenged by to other theologians, Rabanus Maurus and Ratramnus who held a more spiritual understanding of the eucharist.<sup>28</sup>

The first official use of the term transubstantiation occurred in the profession of faith required of Berengar of Tours by synodal action.<sup>29</sup> It was more fully developed by all the major scholastic theologians of the thirteenth century like Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and John Dunc Scotus.<sup>30</sup> Aquinas saw that the sacrifice was completed in the consecration of the elements which changed the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This theory was based on Aristolian philosophy and ended up being the most satisfying explanation to most theologians for the following reasons: it agreed with what people experienced as the real presence of Christ in the eucharist, it agreed with what Christ said in the scriptures (this was his body and blood) and it agreed with the general Aristotelian analysis of reality familiar to the scholastics.<sup>31</sup> This understanding of change in the bread and wine was acknowledged as a metaphysical change rather than a physical change. It was a change in reality that one would perceive cognitively rather than sensorially.

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<sup>28</sup> Kenan Osborne, *Community, Eucharist and Spirituality*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 2007), 69.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph, 2001), 241.

Unfortunately, this theory was highly regarded to the exclusion of other views which were considered false and even heretical.

Aquinas also viewed that God's purpose in giving the eucharist to the church was not in making the bread and wine an object of worship but to give Christians a means of spiritual nourishment. The reality of the sacrament was therefore a grace, the grace of union with Christ experienced in the reception of communion.<sup>32</sup>

During the height of the medieval renaissance in the first half of the thirteenth century, Aquinas and other scholastics like him developed their understanding of the eucharist and other sacraments, from their experience of the sacraments which was guided and formed through faith in the doctrines of the church, the knowledge of the writings of the patristics, and from meditation on scripture. This was not the way theology continued to be developed. This period of theological renewal went into an intellectual decline as there was a tendency to rely on texts and logic to prove propositions with little, if any, support for religious experience. This eventually led to a more legalist and nominalist approach to understanding theology. Over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the experience of the mass became an ecclesiastical ritual with minimum requirements for producing the sacrament. Eucharistic theology became a matter of canon law. On the other hand, Eucharistic devotions became more popular among the laity. The people began to look for alternative ways to express their spirituality.

The laity was more and more removed from active and full participation in the eucharist also in part because the liturgy was said in Latin, they tended to depend upon the work of the priests for the spiritual benefits that could be provided through the eucharist. The focus at this time was on the words and actions of the priest and especially on his words of consecration.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 242.

This also made the liturgy more formal and shrouded it in mystery. Private masses became very common. The private mass offered by a priest without any laity began in the monasteries and wherever monks were being sent for their missionary work. Private masses were also celebrated in large churches at side altars. They would be offered for various kinds of special intentions and paid for by donations from laity. This led to masses being said as a “good work” performed by priests. This approach to worship became so popular that it was easy for abuses to occur as superstitious practices developed. In some cases this led the laity to believe that in order to get to heaven, one needed to purchase indulgences or masses with special intentions. Bishops along with some of the nobility treated the church as a private possession which furthered the belief that God’s favor could be bought and sold. Some of these church practices were the root causes for major reform. This would not be the first time of reform as there were reform movements throughout the previous 1000 years, but this one would be institutionally threatening.

#### Eucharist at the time of the Reformation 1500

Martin Luther, a German priest, challenged the medieval church’s practices of the eucharist. Enrico Mazza in The Celebration of the Eucharist, even regards this challenge as “harsh” citing Luther’s treatise *The Babylonian Captivity* (1520) indicating that “the eucharist is held prisoner to three doctrinal positions: a) the reception of Communion under a single species, b) transubstantiation, and c) the Eucharist as a “good work.”<sup>33</sup> Luther saw that the church’s denial of communion to the laity using both the bread and wine was not biblically based and therefore, was considered a sin. Regarding transubstantiation, Luther wanted to establish a direct connection between the bread and wine and hypostatic union (two natures co-existing in

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<sup>33</sup> Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 237.

Christ). For Luther what was important was the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist rather than the theory that explained the presence.

“For myself I am unable to say how the bread is the Body of Christ; nevertheless I want to make my reason prisoner of obedience to Christ by simply holding fast to his words and firmly believing not only that the body of Christ is in the bread but that the bread is the body of Christ.”<sup>34</sup>

Luther also wanted to place the emphasis of the church back on the people as he stressed that God’s favor could not be earned or bought but was in fact a free gift in Jesus Christ.

Luther was among several reformers of the period. The Reformation was a call to correct abuses in the church’s liturgical practices and Luther seemed to be, of all the reformers, the “key that unlocked a tidal wave of dissent within the Roman church.”<sup>35</sup> Luther challenged the church at its core. The church responded by holding the Council of Trent (1545-1563). They condemned the teachings of the reformers but implicitly acknowledged the abuses that triggered the reform. Through the work of this council the theology of the medieval scholastics was institutionalized which has been in place for more than four centuries. In the wake of this call to reform, several Protestant traditions began.

### Liturgical Change and the Second Vatican Council

At the end of the nineteenth century a wide range of change started to occur with its main focus to bring the laity into a stronger liturgical participation. Prior to 1939 attention was to bring the laity into the liturgy and after 1939 attention was given to bring the liturgy to the laity meaning that all liturgies needed to be meaningfully understood to the laity. In January 1959, John XXIII announced that he would convene an ecumenical council – the Second Vatican Council. The first conciliar document of Vatican II was approved entitled the Constitution of

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<sup>34</sup> Luther, *La cattivita babilonese della chiesa*, ed. G. Panzieri Saija, (Turin, IT: UTET, 1949), 250.

<sup>35</sup> Edward Foley, *From Age to Age*, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991), 116.

the Sacred Liturgy. With this document began the end of an era. It brought forth more changes in the liturgy than had been seen since the sixteenth century. The liturgy was one of the council's principal concerns and it demonstrated a desire to encourage the laity to actively and devoutly participate in the eucharist. There was a connection made between understanding ecclesiology and liturgical celebration. The liturgical assembly was the Church in the best sense as well as the celebrant. As Mazza describes, "The assembly is called together to hear the word, to pray, to sing of God's works, and to obey the command of Christ, who said at the Last Supper: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' For this to be possible, the faithful had to be able to understand the mystery of faith through the rites and the prayers. Only in this way would they be able to participate actively, consciously, and devoutly."<sup>36</sup> To make this happen general reform of the liturgy was needed. The council set out to follow in the footsteps of Pius XI who had already begun a liturgical reform with the rites for Holy Week and the Easter Vigil.

The Second Vatican Council also set in a broader context the true, real, and substantial presence of the Body of Christ as it related to other modes of Christ's presence in the eucharistic celebration, namely, his presence in the assembly and in the person of the minister.<sup>37</sup> The whole celebration was interpreted under the category of Real Presence of Christ. Christ's presence under the appearance of bread and wine was said to be real, not by exclusion, but by its superiority over the other two modes of presence.<sup>38</sup>

### Eucharistic Liturgy Today

Who participates in the eucharistic liturgy today? Simply said, we do. Sofia Cavalletti in Living Liturgy writes that "liturgy is the particular way in which people of the

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<sup>36</sup> Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 252.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

biblical tradition live (sacred) history. Liturgy is always articulated in the three dimensions of past, present and future because this is biblical time, time which is not a fragment but a “chain” held together by the thought of God.”<sup>39</sup> She continued, “Heaven and earth are united in the sacred humanity of Christ. He is the one who is in the ideal position to build the bridge which unites God’s world with the world of humanity. He is the “unifier and mediator.”<sup>40</sup>

Nathan Mitchell in his book, Real Presence, The Work of Eucharist, speaks of the bread and wine as sacramental signs that go through a “series of transformations that literally lead us from this world to the next.”<sup>41</sup> Therefore we can consider the church’s liturgical celebration one that “launches the process of becoming eucharist, a process that is completed only when Christians recognize their own new identity as Christ’s body in the world.”<sup>42</sup> Mitchell shares an interesting perspective from Dominican theologian Herbert McCabe, who in his work titled The Eucharist as Language, says that God does not produce in the eucharist a quasi-chemical change within the bread; instead God utterly transforms the meaning of change itself. God doesn’t change what it is that exists but what it means to exist in the first place.<sup>43</sup> McCabe speaks of a change in the language of eucharist as something that is not a revolution in words but a revolution in worlds.

“A new world is thus (for McCabe) a new language, a new communication; and it is this – a new world, language, and communication – that are given in the eucharist. Christ comes to us as a new medium of communication. He gives us nothing other than himself and his language: body and word.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sofia Cavalletti, *Living Liturgy*, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998),16.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence, The Work of Eucharist*, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000), 104.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

McCabe alludes to what Jesus referred to as the kingdom of God. He spoke in a new language about a new world. Jesus embodied it fully as both the mediator for God and the one activating the new world for us. One way we recognize that new world and be transformed to live into it is through the sacrament of eucharist.

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