



The Eucharistic: Source and Summit of Communion with God and Each Other

Formation Theme (2013-2014): GUIDED BY THE VISION AND MISSION
OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

(Prepared by: Rev. Leo E. Patalinghug, 2014 January)

In preparation for the team meeting, read the section on “Sacrosanctum Concilium: The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy” from Vatican II in Plain English by Bill Huebsch, and the Gathering Reflection below.

Gathering Reflection: On the eve of Vatican II, two related movements were spreading throughout the world that would affect the theological and pastoral approach of the Church in the modern world. The first was the liturgical movement, and the second was biblical. On the second day of the council meetings, it was decided that the Sacred Liturgy would be the first task of reform and renewal for the council fathers. This was considered a bold move to affirm, renew and reform our liturgy without changing the substance of our faith. This focus on liturgy affirmed the concept of *lex orandi, lex credence* – the Latin phrase that says the Law of Prayer establishes the Law of Belief, and *vice versa*. As a sign of the generally universal acceptance, the schema for the Liturgy, in principle, was accepted after convening only after one month. Only 46 council fathers voted against this schema. About one year later, the council approved the final document by a vote of 2,147 to 4. This nearly universal vote would have timeless effect on how people pray – talk to God, and experience the Grace to know God’s will – especially through the understanding and practice of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of communion with God and each other.

As members of Voluntas Dei, we recall how this document affirms the type of prayerful practices to “*make visits to the Blessed Sacrament,*” and seeking “*to practice the Presence of God,*” by seeking to live in God’s Eucharist Presence *before* the tabernacle and *within* us as a living tabernacles.

Gathering Prayer

(Taken from the ritual closing prayer of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament)

Prayer Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death. May our worship of the Sacrament of your Body and Blood help us to experience the salvation you won for us, and the peace of your kingdom, where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever, and ever. Amen.

PART ONE: Pope Francis on the Eucharist, a spirituality of personal presence

The following is an excerpt from Catholic News Agency, reporting on a homily offered by Pope Francis on 24 September 2013:



The Eucharist is not a “magic rite,” but rather an encounter with Jesus, who is our constant companion in life... “God, who has no History because He is eternal, desired to make History by walking alongside His people....He decided to become one of us, and as one of us, to walk with us through Jesus.” In this same homily, Pope Francis stressed that this act not only shows us the greatness of God, but also his humility, saying that when his people strayed from him “in sin and idolatry,” he did not abandon them, but “He was there” waiting for their return. Jesus shows us the same humility, said the Pope, in that “he walks with the People of God, walks with the sinners; walks also with the arrogant,” adding that Jesus did much to “help these arrogant hearts of the Pharisees.” The Church, stressed the pontiff, can rejoice in the humility of God which accompanies us as “We go with joy to the House of the Lord.” “We go with joy because He accompanies us, He is with us...and the Lord Jesus, even in our personal lives, accompanies us with the Sacraments. The Sacrament is not a magic rite: it is an encounter with Jesus Christ; we encounter the Lord – it is He who is beside us and accompanies us.”

For Group Consideration and Discussion:

1. How do you sense God’s greatness and humility in the Eucharist, and in you after receiving the Eucharist?
2. How do the Holy Father’s words challenge our faith and our practice towards the Eucharist?
3. Have you developed a personal growth in Eucharistic Devotion as a result of being a member of Voluntas Dei? If not, is that an area of potential growth for you?

PART TWO: Readings and Discussions from the Council Document, taken from commentaries by Bill Huebsch, “Vatican II in Plain English” (Ave Maria Press, 2008)

The document on the Sacred Liturgy offers several avenues of reform, such as:

(1) Seeing Church and Liturgy as a true action of an invigorated people of God. Here we see the enduring phrase, “full and active participation” – rather than lifeless spectators – at every liturgy: the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, para-liturgical services, and also the promotion of sacramental devotions which are always ordered to ‘foster a richer and more authentic faith life... in harmony with the liturgical seasons and draws people more deeply into the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.’ (Heubsch pp 101-102). In other words, liturgy is life, and ought to be practiced with an intentional and active participation by ALL the faithful.

(2) Another avenue of reform was to promote the theology of the Rites of Initiation, namely the link between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist as an essential and basic sacrament of ministry. This shifts the theological focus, celebrating the “priesthood of the Baptized” in harmony with the “priesthood of the Ordained,” rather than creating division between the two. BOTH priesthood of the faith and ordained priesthood are needed in order to have a truly enlivened Eucharistic Celebration.



The rites of the Church belong to all people who are Baptized, and not just something celebrated by the Ordained.

(3) Council fathers affirmed renewal in the area of recognizing how local parishes and dioceses *do* constitute a full expression of the Church, and not just simply geographical divisions. This offered a balance of promoting a universally accepted rite, but also recognizing local customs, geographical distinctions, and cultural adaptations as approved by the Local Conference of Bishops and approved by the Holy See. This renewal helped the world to see the *universal* aspect of the church, as well as celebrate the *particular* areas of the local church's self-awareness. The dynamic tension between the universal and local are held together by a Catholic ecclesiology as well as a communication, born out of the participation of Holy Communion. In other words, we are one body with many parts, working together in harmony – truly a living and sacramental image of the Body of Christ through the Eucharist. “The essential work of redemption is accomplished mainly through the Liturgy, especially the Eucharist.” (Huebsch p 94)

(4) Another council consideration for renewal and reform focused on the Scriptural relationship to the liturgical and ritual texts. Influenced by the biblical movements (from advancements on biblical research from Catholics, Protestants and Jewish scholarship), Vatican II sought to restore connection between the use of Scripture, the Liturgy of the Word, the ritual Eucharistic prayers, and especially for the training of seminarians and laity. “The Scriptures are of greatest importance to the liturgical celebration, so care should be taken in proclaiming them, homilizing on them, singing hymns derived from them, or praying inspired by them. A warm and living love of the Scriptures it to be fostered. [...] Liturgical books are to be revised as soon as possible, employing experts and consulting with Bishops. [...] Servers, lectors, commentators, and members of the choir exercise a genuine liturgical function and should do so with piety and decorum. They must, therefore, be well trained...” (Huebsch pp 104-105).

(5) An assumed “consideration” for the council fathers was to respect the tension between what is old and what is new, what “reform” really means. Here we see how this tension has played out in various scenarios over the rocky liturgical period that followed the Second Vatican Council. However, the council, as noted by Huebsch's paraphrased texts, shows how this ‘dynamic tension’ was an important consideration for the Church's future: “The Liturgy in all its dimensions, theological, historical, spiritual, practical, and legal, is to be fully explored.”(p 103) “Within certain defined limits, the regulation of the Liturgy belongs also to various local bodies of bishops who set forth norms for their regions.” (p 104) “The Liturgy is both worship of God as well as instruction for the faithful.” (p 105) “The use of Latin is preserved but the use of the mother tongue, which may be of great advantage to the people, is also permitted when requested by the local bishops...Translations into the mother tongue must also be approved.” (p 106) “The Church is both human and divine, present in the world yet not fully at home here. The Liturgy helps us to live with this tension and thus enter fully into a life of faith.” (p 95).

As such, liturgical expression should never be limited to a personal opinion, but in harmony with the local and universal aspect of the ecclesial communion, proper authorities, the needs of the people, and with a spirit that leads all into communion with God and each other.



For Group Consideration and Discussion:

1. Which if these “avenues of reform” (according to Huebsch) speaks most to your experience of the Liturgy and the Eucharist, and why?
 2. What particular area of reform challenges you the most, and why?
 3. How do these observed areas of reform reflect the experiences of the Voluntas Dei community, especially in respect to our personal and communal experiences of Eucharistic inspired prayer?
-

PART THREE: Excerpt Consideration from “Ecclesial Movements and Communities” by Brendan Leahy.

From the key conciliar notion of Church as Mystery emerges another – Church as Communion. It has been declared “authoritatively that the ecclesiology of communion is *the* key ecclesiological idea of Vatican II.... The Council’s notion of vertical and horizontal communion includes several strands. [First Strand] *Equal dignity of all the baptized, [which] recalls the equal dignity of all the baptized and the new commandment of love that is to be the law that regulates life...the mutual communion among the members of the People of God [...] Accordingly, the Church is a family of the children of God in which all are brothers and sisters with one Father and one Teacher.* [Second Strand] *Distinction and relationship among the vocations, highlights the relationship among the vocations of the church. The unity of the Church does not eliminate diversity of the members and functions. Unity requires diversity...in Christifidelis Laici, John Paul II summarized the vision of unity, distinction, and mutual relations in the Church-communion among the three fundamental states of life of the People of God: laity, ordained ministry, and religious life. They are different yet complementary, in a dynamic relationship to one another.”*

For the Group Consideration and Discussion

1. How does Leahy’s observation of the Church as “Communion” serve as a model for your personal experience of Church, the Sacraments, and your relationship with God?
 2. Does Voluntas Dei reflect well these distinctions (diversity) as well as union (harmony)? How can these be improved upon for our own growth?
 3. How can we foster (and celebrate) a greater understanding of “Church as Communion” with our parishes, local communities, and the wider range of believers of different faith traditions?
-



PART FOUR: Inspired from the Literature of the Voluntas Dei Institute Founder, Fr. Louise Marie Parent.

The simple parish priest, Le Cure d’Ars, St. John Vianney, as patron saint for all priests, shows a true “Voluntas Dei” spirituality, in that he retained a humble understanding of the priesthood’s dignity – for the ordained and the priesthood of the laity. For many years, he alone served the small town of Ars, France. Yet, in his true and sincere collaboration with religious and laity, i.e., the Body of Christ, he turned the small town into a spiritual center of renewal, a place where people found God and discerned God’s will. According to the many writings, St. John Vianney even learned how to pray from a layperson, a simple man who would just sit before the Blessed Sacrament. In a paraphrased discussion, the young priest, Fr. Vianney asked the man, “what do you do just sitting there in Church?” The man responded, “I look at God and let God look at me”

[\[http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/what_you_need_to_know/index.cfm?id=74, paragraph 4\]](http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/what_you_need_to_know/index.cfm?id=74)

As members of Voluntas Dei, we are called to gaze on God, and to allow God’s love to occur in us and through us – we who promise to be “God’s presence” in this world. This unbelievable “gift” can be achieved with a healthy, holistic and holy understanding of the Eucharist: God’s presence – the source and summit of our lives.

Fr. Louise Marie Parent reflects on God’s gaze in his writings, “Intimacy with Jesus.”

“If I were to think often that God has his eyes fixed constantly on me, my thoughts would be more serene, my heart would be pacified, my conduct would be irreproachable, my service for the benefit of others would be completely disinterested. [...] Try to see yourselves totally plunged into the thought of God, encircled, permeated like your body in a swimming pool or in the sea. Feel him in his goodness, his mercy, his tenderness, his compassion. You are the object of his love. [...] This presence of God does not allow itself to be grasped by human intelligence; with God it is an affair of the heart. [...] Allow yourself to be penetrated by God’s look, to discover God who gazes at you, to attach yourself to his presence and say to him: “My soul waits for the Lord more than the sentinel waits for dawn.” (Psalm 130:6)”

He expounds on this Divine Presence of God when he affirms the teachings from the Council in regards to the Sacred Liturgy, when he writes:

“Jesus gave his life for all humanity; no one is excluded from his love. In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Second Vatican Council describes the presence of Jesus Christ in the Liturgy, in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the person of the minister, because: “he who now offers through the ministry of the priest is he who offered himself on the cross.” Jesus is present, above all, in the Eucharist. [...] Let us give more profound study to this teaching, we who frequent the Church, who are part of it, who consider it the spiritual source par excellence; we who have consecrated our lives to it. It would be good to reread attentively each phrase of this document of Vatican II in order to discover the profound quality of the presence of Jesus in the smallest actions of the Liturgy. To discover also, whether we be priests or not, that Jesus penetrates us, that he wants to have need of us, that he is constantly before us, not to block our way but to accompany us, to guide us, to prepare



the table for us, to welcome us, to measure out his grace and happiness for us all the days of our lives. (Parent pp80- 85 ff)

For Group Consideration and Discussion:

1. How do these different resources (Vatican II Documents, Leahy, Heusch, Fr. Parent) shape our devotion, spirituality, knowledge and pastoral activity in regards to our relationship to the Eucharist?
2. What can we do as a group and individually to spread this “Good News” to a world that hungers for the Presence of God?
3. How can we reconcile our practice of “Proper Reception of Holy Communion” with those who, by their different profession of faith and religious tradition, are not able to share Sacramental Communion with us?

(i.e., Ought we not foster opportunities for meals with people of different faith traditions? Should the Catholic Church consider the practice of the ‘blessed bread’ (antidoron) of the Byzantine Liturgy different from the Eucharist? Is the simple act of feeding the poor not a “sacramental” sign of Holy Communion?) In other words, how do we make sure our understanding of Communion is not “limited” but truly expanded to all of God’s Children, while retaining and respecting the tradition of our Catholic Faith?)

Closing Prayer

Fr. Louise Marie Parent, “Prayer of Adoration” (See In Intimacy with Jesus, p 174-175)

O Lord, You are the grandeur of all that is grand. You are the beauty of all that is beautiful.

You are the kindness of all that is kind. You are better than all that is good.

You live in all truth; you vivify all the living. You animate all movement; you are the energy that resists; you are the energy that activates; you are the energy that gives dynamism.

In your presence, the sun dresses with your light, the moon shines with your shadow, the rivers clap their hands, the mountains dance with joy, the streams sing their hymns, the stars shine like eyes on the face of the heavens. All is marvelous in you.

I bow before you; I prostrate myself. I adore.

Amen.