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**SECOND DRAFT: The Communion Rite
and the Paschal Mystery**

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This column in the next two issues of Liturgical Ministry will reflect upon the connections between the Pascal Mystery and the Rite of Communion in the Mass. Personal dimensions of the Rite which resonate particularly with the Pascal Mystery are treated here, and the summer number will concentrate upon the ecclesial or social dimensions. Both columns are informed by the realization that the frequency with which Catholics now receive Holy Communion is very recent in the history of the Church. A concerted campaign to implement the two relevant decrees of Pius X did effect this change in our sacramental practice. What can this history contribute to the theme of the Pascal Mystery in the Mass? The campaign's propaganda served to educate both clergy and laity to the importance of the Pascal Mystery in the action of receiving Communion--both in Christ's action of saving us and in our own most significantly sacramental appropriation of this salvation through Holy Communion. One would be guilty of oversimplification to say that the campaign for frequent and even daily Holy Communion was the preeminent factor in raising the profile of the Pascal Mystery in the consciousness of Catholics in the twentieth century. Given both the magnitude and ultimate success of this campaign, however, its influence cannot be ignored. This column summarizes three instances of the campaign's propaganda, and then discerns the Pascal Mystery with respect

to the individual through the various ritual actions that comprise the Communion Rite. It concludes with a theological consideration of the importance of eating to the Mass; it thus shows that the limited success of the campaign for frequent Communion has effectively neutralized what Campbell called the "objectivistic view" of the privileged sacrament of the Paschal Mystery.

Truly, the bulk of the history of the Eucharist reveals an objectification of the sacrament. This went hand in hand with the epochal decline in its reception. Nothing witnesses more eloquently to this objectification than the disputes between Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus of Corbie in the ninth century and the Eucharistic devotions, still valid and edifying in accordance with their nature, which arose to compensate for the decline of Holy Communion among the laity. The ritual deprivation of Communion contributed to thinking of it as a thing, the *body* of Christ, and even to regarding the consecrated "bread" as a relic. This short essay cannot assess whether these developments were injurious or only seem purely so from the point of views both of the liturgical reforms enacted by the Second Vatican Council and of current sacramental theology. Now, Holy Communion means encounter with the person, Jesus Christ, the Paschal Lamb. As Nathan Mitchell has observed,

The body of Christ offered to Christians in consecrated bread and wine is not *something* but *someone*. In the Eucharist, Christ is present not as an 'object' to be admired but as a person (a 'subject') to be encountered. . . Roman Catholic eucharistic tradition thus insists that the Christological cannot be separated from the ecclesiological. The body of Christ is not only 'on' the table but 'at' the table (Nathan Mitchell, "Disputed Questions: Who Is At the Table? Reclaiming the Real Presence," *Commonweal* (27 January 1995): 12).

This awareness of the personalistic aspects of Holy Communion--as well as numerous profound shifts in religious attitudes and presuppositions--coheres with a landmark change in sacramental practice.

Only within the twentieth century and as the fruit of a concerted campaign for it, has the reception of Holy Communion become relatively frequent. The documentary evidence for the decline of the reception of Holy Communion extends as far back as the fourth century, and commentators disagree about when, precisely within this century--and even if--Catholics have returned to the earliest practice of communicating frequently. Some claim that the goal was reached within a generation of Pope Saint Pius X's *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* (1905), while others, such as Godfrey Diekmann, consider the sessions of the Second Vatican Council as the time when frequent Holy Communion became a reality. In some cultural contexts, even to this date, change in patterns of receiving Communion may not have occurred. For example, priests who have ministered among both Mexican-Americans and Anglos observe a great contrast in sacramental practice, and a relatively lesser recourse to the sacraments by the Mexican-Americans includes less reception of Holy Communion. Even if the Diekmann's late estimation for the return of frequent Communion seems the most judicious, this immense change in sacramental practice is invisible to those who rely, in their liturgical analysis, upon the texts alone of the Eucharistic liturgy.

While the evidence suggests that the success of the campaign hinged upon mitigating the rigorously strict discipline of fasting in anticipation of the sacrament, much of the literature of the campaign for frequent Communion argued from the mystical meaning and spiritual benefits of Holy Communion. In exploring and in popularizing Holy Communion, this body of

literature allowed the Paschal Mystery to take center stage in the sacramental theology of the middle third of the twentieth century. For example, *Mystici Corporis Christi* appeared in 1943. Writers we need to examine because of their roles in the campaign for frequent Holy Communion represent three Western-European cultures and their mother tongues were French, English, and German.

Father Jules Lintelo, SJ (d. 1917), had been the most prominent advocate for frequent Communion until the cause for the canonization of Pope Pius X highlighted the role of the latter in ratifying and bolstering frequent Communion. In fact, the campaign for greater frequency had begun in France in conjunction with the international Eucharistic Congresses in the 1880s. Lintelo's pamphlet war with the redoubtable Redemptorist, Francis-Xavier Godts (d. 1928), impelled Pius X to settle the dispute, and Pius championed Lintelo, who ardently favored frequent and daily Holy Communion. A compendium of Lintelo's thought appears in an English translation, *The Eucharistic Triduum: An Aid to Priests in Preaching Frequent and Daily Communion According to the Decrees of H.H. Pius X* (N.p: N.p, 1909). His thought was not creative, but was most representative of the writings of the entire movement for frequent Communion. For us, this is its precise value.

Quite in keeping with the substance of his polemic against Godts, in large measure this book argues from authority. Since this book follows the Holy Father's *motu proprio* that unleashed the forces in favor of frequent Communion in settling the Belgian dispute in favor of Lintelo, it revels in its victory by amply citing *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* (1905). Even Pius X had argued from the authority of both Jesus Christ himself and the whole Church. Pius's bold but unsubstantiated statement that it was the will of Jesus that Communion be frequently received

was strengthened by Lintelo when he observed that bread, being so common, was chosen by Jesus for the matter of the sacrament precisely to make the reception more widely available. Indeed, this argument from the nature of the form of the sacrament was central to Lintelo's pamphleteering in the two years before *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*. Much of the book was a parade of testimonials on the benefits for frequent reception of Holy Communion and excerpts from the lives and writings of saints who frequented the Eucharistic table. Because the authority of the Church at that time was so unanswerable, Lintelo argued that its promotion of frequent Communion should automatically override scruples of the individual conscience, formed in the days when Holy Communion was likely an annual event for the vast majority of observant Catholics. He reasoned that, if the Church was saying that frequent, ideally even daily, Communion was possible, then it would follow that most Catholics were capable of receiving it fruitfully. Remember that Holy Communion had been generally perceived for centuries rather as a reward for exemplary purity of life and a very extraordinary level of zeal, rather than as participation in the Paschal Mystery, and as personal encounter with Jesus. Lintelo shifted the emphasis from the action of the recipient of Communion, who was ritually and morally as pure as could be, to the action of Christ. "Shortly, we go to Communion not because we are good, but because Our Lord is; not because we deserve it, but because we need it" (*Triduum*, 74). As his contemporaries in the Liturgical Movement repeatedly and confidently did, Lintelo argued from the texts of the liturgy itself that "general" Communion was the original intention of the breaking of the bread. "It [the liturgy] teaches us that, from the very beginning, Holy Communion was the normal and obligatory complement of the Mass" (*Triduum*, 48). At the time when private

devotional acts of preparation before and thanksgiving after Holy Communion were plentiful and varied, Lintelo stated that the best bracketing of Communion would be participation in the Mass; this, too, concurred with a theme of the Liturgical Movement. “. . . Uniting oneself with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is preferable to other methods which draw their inspiration from other sources” (*Triduum*, 64).

Lintelo’s book detailed quite a battery of arguments in favor of frequent Communion. For resonances with the Paschal Mystery, it relied upon the basic symbolism of the sacrament as food. Because the Eucharist was an anti-type of the manna of the Exodus, and because this manna was clearly a food that supplied sustenance *daily* for the Hebrews, Holy Communion was to be received every day. The reference to the Exodus calls to mind the Passover meal by which the Jews made present ritually their liberation, and also Jesus’ use of this meal for his Last Supper, the prototype of the Mass and Holy Communion. Note that the allusion to the *pascha* is quite subtle in that it is conveyed by the physical object of the manna; because Lintelo was arguing for frequency of reception, he did not expound the allusion which banks upon general familiarity with the story of Moses and liberation from slavery. By instituting the sacrament with the simplest and commonest of foods, bread, Jesus Christ created the conditions for the ready availability of Holy Communion. As a sacrament of food the Eucharist was to be received as food was under normal circumstances--every day. Lintelo concluded with a reference to the petition of the Lord’s Prayer; many venerable commentaries upon it equate the “daily bread” with a Eucharistic Bread (34-36).

As to connecting the individual Christian with the Paschal Mystery, Lintelo noted that the Passion of Christ intended to bring individuals to salvation. By means of the practice of

devotion to the Sacred Heart, Lintelo observed that to deny the frequency of Holy Communion was to deny to the Passion of Christ its efficacy.

In His Incarnation, Life, Passion, and Death the loving Master of the vineyard has humbled Himself, has toiled, bled, and died to *sanctify* us as well as to save us. Will you selfishly refuse Him the just fruit of His toil and sufferings by avoiding a practice which will enable you to yield it to His Sacred Heart? . . . In His Holy Sacrament, whether you receive Him often or seldom, He gives you His *whole* Self: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—all. (73)

At the top of Lintelo's list of fruits of Communion was that "union with Christ is increased" (85). The intensity of this union with Christ Lintelo revealed by the analogy of the wax of two separate candles fusing, and, citing Aquinas, he emphasized that uniting with Christ is a gradual process. This gradualness is to be effected, of course, by frequent Communion.

A more interesting unification with Christ--and thus a willing participation in the Paschal Mystery--occurred in the common practice of intending Holy Communion as reparation. This idea of reparation was pivotal in the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and this devotion proved a preparation for, and a ready ally of, the campaign for frequent Communion. Reparation worked this way--the communicant would intend to make it for the insult and neglect which afflicted Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. While exhortations to make this type of reparation would not have explicitly identified the devotee with Christ in his self-offering, this intention "to repair" linked the communicant with Christ in his saving role.

First, the communicant was imitating Jesus in participating in the sacramental meal that, in its turn, resonated with the Passover. Second, the communicant was "sacrificing" himself in at least three ways. He or she would have endured the natural fast from midnight. Elsewhere, Lintelo called this an inconvenience. The communicant would have, as was the thoroughly observed custom, confessed and performed the assigned penance; in addition, she would have

scrupulously avoided the least imperfection of behavior and even etiquette while anticipating her Communion with her Lord. Finally, she would also have made a public gesture of belief in the mystery of the Real Presence in the act of communicating itself. Lintelo expressed it in this way, "The Christian appropriates to himself the atonements of the Savior, and his own become, as it were, absorbed. And to make this union all the closer Our Lord has made Himself food. At no other time, then, can our reparation be more efficacious" (137-138).

In a short article connecting the Liturgical and the Eucharistic Movements, Lintelo declared that both movements have the same goal: the union of the individual with Christ. Here, he emphasized by simple analogy the instrumentality of the Cross in effecting the union. Upon being run through, Jesus "bled" water (Baptism, which incorporates into the body of Christ), and blood (Holy Communion, which by virtue of concomitance even in the reception only of the consecrated Bread, "contains" the whole Christ, including his sacramental blood. Remember that in addition to being an era of rare Communion, no one except the consecrating priest would receive the Precious Blood.)

Simultaneously with the writings of Jules Lintelo appeared, in England, a most durable book by Mother Mary Loyola, IVBM (Sister of Loreto). *Welcome: Holy Communion, Before and After*, first published in the first decade of the 1900s, but still in print in 1948, developed the virtually universal and obligatory practices of "Acts" (i.e., private prayers) of Preparation and Thanksgiving before and after receiving Holy Communion. But as liturgical scholar and reformer Herbert Thurston, SJ., explained in the foreword to the book, her intention was not to expand this already

large body of devotional work, but rather “to propose a dominant thought, to fall in with a mood, or need, or burden.”(*Welcome*, ix). Individual chapters speak of various *personae*—Mary, the Child, the Toiler—welcoming Jesus in their sacramental actions of receiving Communion.

Mother Loyola identifies with the Paschal Mystery, although the phrase does not occur in the text, first by the recurrent motif of “offering.” In her pious reflections, it is the self in its totality that must be offered to God. “I come to thee, then, with all I have and am. I offer thee my soul and body, all the good things of this life with which thou hast blessed me . . . my work and my amusements, . . . my desires and disappointments, . . . all the circumstances and vicissitudes of life—I offer them all to thee, dear Lord” (*Welcome*, 170). But it is only through union with all the saints, in this communion, and with Jesus Christ in Holy Communion that such offering is possible, especially in view of the unworthiness of the creature.

And since all I have is unworthy of thy acceptance, I offer thee the virtues and merits of all the Angels and Saints. I offer thee the heart of Mary most holy. I offer thee thy own most sacred Heart, an offering of infinite worth, made over to me in holy Communion that I may present it to thee again, a more than sufficient return for all I have received, for all I expect here and hereafter. I offer thee this Sacred Heart for every soul in the world to-day” (*Welcome*, 11).

The very idea of self-offering recalls the docetic passage of Philippians 2:6-11, and the individual communicant puts on the priestly function of Christ by making this mystically comprehensive offering in conjunction with her reception of Holy Communion.

Mother Mary specifies, however, that it is Christ’s initiative that empowers the communicant, and her articulation of the divinization of the communicant recalls the traditions of Eastern spirituality in particular. “Christ unites his sacred flesh to mine, his Heart and Soul to mine in a union only surpassed in intimacy by the Hypostatic union itself. Gradually his life

passes into mine, my coldness, inertness, lifelessness give way—“the child's flesh grew warm”” (*Welcome*, 183). The “divinizing” of humanity, begins with the Incarnation, and this, too, is a wondrous element of the Paschal Mystery. As Mother Loyola puts it, “Here on the altar is Bethlehem and Calvary” (*Welcome*, 19). While these two geographic locations convey by allusion the salient mysteries of our salvation, Mother Mary does not neglect the totality of the human life of the historical Jesus. In a generous sense, the term *Paschal Mystery* refers to all that is Christ as well as the appropriation of Christ by each of the faithful. The Christ-event retains its human and historical unity as an act of God’s love even for the conventionally abject sinner. Here Mother Mary witnesses this expansive idea of the Paschal Mystery.

I have within my breast the Heart that loved me uninterruptedly throughout the three-and-thirty years. As the Babe lay on the manger straw; as the Boy lay awake at night in the cottage at Nazareth; as the Man worked hard all day in the village shop; as he preached and cured; as he walked up and down the land, his Heart was beating always with love of me. Slower and slower, as the three hours dragged on, it beat upon the Cross, faltering, failing—until it stopped” (*Welcome*, 204-205).

In this, Mother Mary Loyola anticipates an ecumenical trend that came to fruition about fifty years later.

The powerful medieval and Reformation concentration on the cross has been broadened to include the other ‘mighty acts’ of God in Jesus Christ: the thanksgiving and the anamnesis are now likely to mention the birth, life, passion, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly intercession of Jesus Christ as well as his expected parousia” (Wainwright, Geoffrey, “Recent Eucharistic Revision” in *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, Paul Bradshaw, revised edition (New York: Oxford, 1992) 335).

Catholic Biblical scholarship, greater attention to the liturgy of the Word, and more vibrant acceptance of the humanity of Christ have expanded the concept of the Paschal Mystery.



Mother Mary Loyola's piety often abases the communicant, although at that time the receiver enjoyed a reputation for rectitude and piety. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger describes the proper attitude towards Communion in a less Victorian idiom:

Reverential fear is a fundamental condition for a true Eucharist, and precisely the fact that God becomes so small, so humble, hands himself over to us and allows us to hold Him in our hands, ought to cause our reverence to increase. And prevent us from wandering off into distraction and self-sufficiency (Joseph Ratzinger, "The Bread We Break, Is It Not Communion With the Body of Christ," *Inside the Vatican* (February, 1998): 51).

One invariable text of the Communion Rite includes a Biblical sentence that vents our acute awareness of unworthiness—"Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof."

A poetic articulation comes the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin in a circular letter to the faithful of Chicago: "Let us examine our lives honestly each time before approaching the Eucharist.

'Worthy' none of us ever is, but properly prepared each one of us must be. Christ, present in the Eucharist and in us, calls us to be a holy communion" (*Our Communion, Our Peace, Our*

Promise: Pastoral Letter on the Liturgy, N.p.: N.p. (February, 1984), 19). In his context, the

communion is one that, at the reception of the Holy Communion, eliminates injurious social

divisions. Mother Mary Loyola helped to promote frequent reception of Holy Communion and to do so articulated in a very popular way the active but intentional identification of the

communicant with the Paschal offering of Jesus as priest.

In contrast to Mother Mary's self-abasement, the German Jesuit Joseph Kramp questioned the suitability of a Victorian piety with respect both to the will of Jesus in the institution of the Eucharist and its mystical fruits. "Are the prevailing communion devotions of the faithful psychologically possible? Can the soul be depressed by a clear consciousness of its nothingness and at the same moment be elevated to the heights of intensest love and devotion?"

(Joseph Kramp, "Why Frequent Communion is Declining," *The Fortnightly Review* 29 (1922): 381). These rhetorical questions clearly expect a negative answer. Kramp's contribution to the success of the campaign for frequent Communion was to mitigate the excessive piety of abysmal unworthiness and to shift the idea of the communicant's offering from individualistic to truly liturgical piety.

Kramp both styled himself and was regarded by leaders in the Liturgical Movement as a bridge between it and the Eucharistic Movement. His ultimate goal, as described in his book, *Eucharistia*, was the reestablishment of Christendom, and in this respect Kramp revisited the original political program of the Eucharistic Movement nearly fifty years earlier. His more immediate objective was to stimulate the lagging campaign for frequent Communion. Kramp emphasized that the Eucharist was a re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary and that the Mystical Body was rooted in this Paschal sacrifice. Like Mother Loyola, Kramp united the worshiper with Christ in the act of offering, but much more than Loyola, Kramp placed the offering not only in intentions within the private devotions of the preparation before and the thanksgiving after Communion, but in the liturgical action. Kramp drew upon the historians of religion, according to whom any offering was symbolic of the self. Food, however, was especially symbolic of the life of the worshiper by means of the natural symbolism of food in sustaining life (*Eucharistia*, 54). This theme of the natural symbolism of eating has been developed in recent years incisively by Philip Rouillard:

In every act of nourishment there is therefore presence of life and death, a struggle for life against the danger of death, theft or gift of a life sacrificed in order to permit another to have life and to have it abundantly. The application of this to the Eucharist is evident: in receiving the consecrated bread and wine I nourish with the life of the wheat and the grapes sacrificed for me but also with the body of Christ given for me and with his blood shed for me (Philippe Rouillard, "From Human Meal to Christian Eucharist," in *Living*

Bread, Saving Cup: Readings on the Eucharist, ed. R. Kevin Seasoltz (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1982), 128).

From the post-Reformation “objectivistic” point of view, the climax of the Mass was the Eucharistic prayer, both words and actions, because its consecration effected the Real Presence, but Kramp described what was most significant primarily in terms of the self-offering of Christ on the cross, continually re-presented in all its significance at each Mass. The body of Christ was not a thing to be adored at the Elevation of the Mass or in the monstrance at Benediction, but an action that, by the grace of the Paschal Mystery, transcended history for our sake.

Even as Christ offered Himself, so, too, must the communicant perform his or her sacramental reception—emphatically as an offering of self—in union with the offering of Christ on Calvary. As Kramp expressed it, “Both inwardly and outwardly, our offering is made one with His” (Kramp, 61). This profound identification with Christ, in its own and God-ordained sacramental way, also led to reflections upon the Mystical Body, and each communicant’s place in it.

The Body of the Lord hidden under the appearances of bread and wine is also a symbol of His Mystical Body of which we are the members. With Christ and in Christ we ascend from this altar on earth to the altar on high in the sight of the divine majesty of the Father (Kramp, 61).

The image is of offering, and the identification with Christ is thorough and salvific through the prior and intentional offering of Christ and not through our own abilities. The plural form of the prayers of the priest, a commonplace of the Liturgical Movement to recall the more active participation of the laity, gave Kramp textual evidence for the priestly capabilities of all the

communicants. They united not only with Christ in his priestly offering of self, but they also united with the human priest in the rite.

American Roman Catholics articulate the nature of their reception of the Eucharist in distressingly problematic ways, saying that it is “symbolic.” Still, some perceive a “lack of respect” in church and even a trend towards “casual Communion”— i.e., Communion received with little consideration, preparation, and even faith. Minimal recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation triggers this alarm. Archbishop Julian Herranz, president of the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts said in an article in *L'Osservatore Romano* (November 2-3, 1999) that “bishops ‘even in solidly Catholic countries’ were disturbed by the number of faithful ‘who have no qualms in going to Communion with relative frequency, but who aren’t accustomed to approaching the sacrament of penance” (John Norton, “Casual Reception of Eucharist Worries Vatican Official,” *The Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times* (11 November 1999): 25). Unfamiliarity with the campaign for frequent Communion in the first two decades of this century gives rise to mystification about the cause of this decline in confessions. Bishop Kenneth E. Untener of Saginaw, Michigan, for example, said at the national meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, “It’s eerie how this [weekly confession] went out the window. People just stopped going” (Melissa Johnson, “Liturgists Discuss Ways to Draw Catholics Back to Confession,” *The Wilmington (Delaware) Dialog*, 28 October 1999, 7). In fact, Lintelo’s and then Pius’s campaign quite deliberately and programmatically, and with the encouragement of subsequent popes, sought to disconnect the reception of Communion from penance. Furthermore, an unintended consequence of this disconnection was the de-emphasis of devotional confession. Given the magnitude of the Paschal action of Christ in the Eucharist,

casual Communion may be a real threat, for it would be a “way of praying” that could erode the vitality of the doctrine of the Real Presence, a doctrine which guarantees that Christ by virtue of the Paschal Mystery is alive and active for the faithful even today.

The components of the revised Communion Rite call each individual to participation in the Paschal Mystery in many ways. Josef Jungmann’s commentary on the pre-reform Mass pertains all the more since the liturgy now uses the vernacular. The Lord’s Prayer, the first part of this ritual, eminently serves to prepare the communicant to receive. Jungmann underlined the prayer’s amazing aptness for this purpose in the design of the liturgy. “The attitude and spirit which this prayer embodies is fitting at this hour when we have in our hands the offering with which the Son Himself met His heavenly Father and meets him still” (Josef A. Jungmann, “The Communion Cycle” in *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, new and abridged edition, tr. by Francis A. Brunner, rev. by Charles K. Riepe (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1959), 465). The “offering” now in our hands—and being offered, presumably, by us—is the mode of the encounter between Jesus and the Father on the Cross. The Lord’s Prayer bridges from the Eucharistic Prayer to the rite of reception by echoing elements of the latter, such as the word *hallowed* recalling the “Holy, Holy, Holy” (Jungmann, 464). The prayer also strikes a suitably penitential note as it implores God to “forgive us our sins.” The fathers, however, did not, in commenting upon the phrase, emphasize the sinfulness of the communicant. For them, rather, the Lord’s Prayer performed a decorous duty. “For Augustine, the Our Father is like washing the face before going to the altar”(Jungmann, 465).

The chant to accompany the fractioning of the host(s), the “Lamb of God,” directly follows. It refers to the Paschal Mystery quite clearly. *Paschal* derives from the Hebrew word

pesach, which is the ritual remembrance of Israel's deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. In English this is called Passover. A lamb was sacrificed in the celebration of this ritual meal because the slaughtering and eating of a lamb was the first step prescribed in the complex of actions that lead the Israelites out of slavery. John the Baptist makes explicit the connection between Jesus Christ and the Jewish ritual when he refers to his cousin as the Lamb of God (Jungmann, 485). "Taking away the sins of the world" is the holy end of Christ's enacting--or, better, *being*--the Paschal Mystery. Even the fractioning which occurs during this chant was considered a reference to "our Lord's Passion and death" in the East (Jungmann, 485). The juxtaposition of the ritual action, the breaking, and the chant indicates an explanatory deep-structure to this ritual unit. In other words, the action of breaking the loaf, allegorically the death of Jesus, is explained by the words of the chant which in turn transport the congregation to Jewish sacred history through ritual.

The Prayer after Communion, the final part of the Communion Rite, also serves as the concluding prayer to the whole Eucharistic action, if it be granted that the dismissal rite is more direction and blessing than oration. This post-Communion prayer varies with season, feast, and occasion; by its language it tends to exalt the celebration of the sacrament rather than to resonate with the Paschal Mystery. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* specifies the connection of the prayer to the reception of Communion. It says, "In the prayer after communion the priest petitions for the effects of the mystery just celebrated. . ." (56 k). Although the prayer-texts may seldom articulate dimensions of the Paschal Mystery, an active and conscious, a true, doing of Communion must be Paschal. The "effects" is the appropriation of the life of Christ which each communicant intends in the reception.

In keeping with their nature, the Prayers after Communion minimize textual references to the Paschal Mystery. They consistently beg for greater faith, hope and love in multitudinous ways. Perhaps if the entire corpus of Post-Communion Prayers were surveyed, some starker references to the Paschal Mystery would surface. A sampling of the Lent and Easter Sunday orations shows that the Paschal Mystery does not in them ring forth. For example, of the Sundays in Lent, only the fifth and Passion Sunday project the main ideas of the Paschal Mystery. The fifth uses sacrificial language and prays for union with Christ. The Prayer after Communion for Palm Sunday says, “. . . The death of your Son gives us hope and strengthens our faith. May his resurrection give us perseverance and lead us to salvation.” As Eastertide ripens, references in the Communion Prayers to the Paschal Mystery become more discernable. For example, that of the fourth Sunday refers to the “blood of Christ,” and that of the sixth, though still preeminently sacramental, explains that by Christ’s resurrection God “restored us to life.”

Let us step back now from the Prayers after Communion and also shift our gaze from textual to a more properly ritual matter--a meal. The importance of the actual taking of Communion is clear even from the eminent and very traditional names for the Eucharist, “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). As the epitome of all the sacraments and the foundational experience of the Church, the sacrament appropriately bears many names, each representing one aspect of the “inexhaustible richness” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1328) of the Eucharist. The principle and familiar names are Lord’s Supper, Breaking of Bread, Eucharistic assembly, memorial of the Lord’s Passion, Holy Sacrifice, sacrifice of praise, spiritual sacrifice, holy

sacrifice, Sacred Mysteries, Most Blessed Sacrament, Holy Mass, and Holy Communion (CCC, 1329-1332). While many of these terms apply to the entirety of the Eucharistic liturgy, the terms *Breaking of Bread* and *Holy Communion* apply most particularly to the Communion Rite of the Mass, and these two synonyms illuminate the connections between the Communion Rite and the Paschal Mystery. *Breaking of Bread*, a highly Biblical phrase, refers preeminently to the institution of the sacrament by Jesus Christ as an enrichment of Jewish ritual. The gesture of the breaking of bread also proves the token by which the disciples recognize Jesus after his Resurrection and in fact was the early Christians' name for their own worship (CCC, 1329). Gabe Huck cautions that Holy Communion is *not* identical to the Eucharist. This seems an effort to guard the integrity of the Mass in the face of Communion Services which may become more common because of lack of priests (Gabe Huck, *The Communion Rite at Sunday Mass* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1989), 1). In contrast, Robert Hovda subsumes the entire Eucharist under Communion Rite because he sees the reception of Communion as the evident goal of the institution of the sacrament and hence as the "climax" of the Mass (Robert W. Hovda, "Pastoral Guidelines," in *It Is Your Own Mystery: A Guide to the Communion Rite*, ed. Melissa Kay (Washington: The Liturgical Conference, 1977), 16).

In the post-Reformation theological configuration, forged more reactively than positively, the most important part of the Roman Catholic Mass was the consecration within the Eucharistic prayer, for this was when the Real Presence came to be. And ritually, this Real Presence was the preeminent object of devotion, for receiving Communion was so very, very rare. The Real Presence was emphatically a thing in the regnant and objectivistic view of the Eucharist. Accordingly, the Eucharistic prayer could be perceived as "simply a more hospitable

or festive setting for the consecration” (Edward Foley, “The Eucharistic Prayer: An Unexplored Creed,” *Assembly* 23 (1997):11). The Real Presence, removed from Holy Communion in practice, was a wondrous miracle, and so the priest’s effecting it allowed the Eucharistic prayer highest priority. As the *General Instruction* says, “Now the center and summit of the entire celebration begins: the eucharistic prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification” (note 54).

Since the campaign for frequent reception of Holy Communion, starting in the 1880s, has made significant strides, and since the impasses with the Churches of the Reformation have become bi-lateral commissions, both sacramental praxis and theological speculation have contributed to a return to the idea that the sharing in the sacramental meal by the congregation is crucial in the performance of the Eucharistic liturgy. No longer does focus upon the consecration make the Communion Rite a mere “appendage” (Edward J. Kilmartin, *Church, Eucharist, and Priesthood: A Theological Commentary on “The Mystery and Worship of the Most Holy Eucharist”* (New York: Paulist, 1981), 9). Indeed, as Stanislaus Campbell pointed out in the last issue of *Liturgical Ministry*, such narrowing tends to remove the faithful from their own participation in the Paschal Mystery (Campbell, ___ 6). The Communion of the laity attracts needed reflection. “The visible sign of the self-offering of Christ in the Eucharist and of the participants’ insertion into this self-offering is the meal. It signifies on the one hand Jesus Christ’s offering of himself as food and, on the other, the thankful acceptance of this giving of himself by the participants” (Kilmartin, 11). Far from denigrating the sacrificial aspect of the Mass, Kilmartin balances both the sacrificial aspect on the part of Jesus and the communicant’s involvement in the sacramental action. “There exists . . . an intrinsic relation between the personal self-offering of Jesus, together with that of his body, the Church, and the Eucharistic

sharing of food and drink which is its effective sign” (Kilmartin, 9). The entire sacrificial life of Jesus cannot, however, be contained by the actions of the priest.

The sacramental symbolic form that proclaims the presence of Christ’s sacrifice is the liturgical recitation of the account of institution of the Eucharist. The sacramental symbolic gesture, or action, which represents and applies this sacrifice to the participants is the sharing of the meal (Kilmartin, 31).

“Christ’s sacrifice” refers most directly to his death on the Cross, which is but one crucial component of the Paschal Mystery which must refer also to the Resurrection in order to validate the sacrifice, and then, more expansively and as the liturgy of the Word emphasizes, to the totality of the life and ministry of Jesus. This is not all, however, as Jeff Kemper pointed out in “Liturgy Notes” in the winter of 1999. He explained that the concept of the Paschal Mystery “became the chief paradigm for understanding the dynamic and pattern of Christian living and incorporation into the redemptive plan of Jesus Christ.” In other words, the Paschal Mystery begins with Jesus, but ends in the participation of each of the faithful in that mystery. Indeed, the point of Christ’s life, death and resurrection is for Christians to partake of this pattern of self-sacrificial living. The Eucharistic prayers—“the liturgical recitation of the account of the institution of the Eucharist”—richly and thematically and narratively proclaim the sacrifice of Christ. An exclusive attention to the priestly action was centered in polemics with the Reformers about the nature of the Eucharist and denials of the Real Presence and was reinforced by the answer to the accusation that Communion was not taken by Catholics. In fact, the obligatory receiving of Communion by the priest was considered by apologists for the practice as another means in which the priest was representing the entire congregation. The faithful received by proxy, as it were. Because, in fact, very few Catholics were receiving Communion at the time of

the Reformation, the connection between Christ's Paschal Mystery and each Christian's was ritually obscured.

Kilmartin reminds us that Christ instituted Holy Communion for our own appropriation of the mysteries of the Cross and the Resurrection. "Holy Communion therefore. . . is a privileged moment of the sacramental encounter with the crucified and risen Lord which begins with the sacramental re-presentation of the cross through the consecration of bread and wine" (Kilmartin 32-33). Or again, and perhaps more dramatically, Kilmartin writes, "[Holy Communion] makes the participant into his [Christ's] body and draws them into his destiny" (Kilmartin, 11). That the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* thrusts the priest's role into the foreground--a role which is protected from erosion by strictures against the congregational recitation of the concluding formula of the Eucharistic prayers, "Through Him, with Him. . ."--and that the *Instruction* calls the Eucharistic prayer the "center and summit of the entire celebration," may reflect more an objectivistic and static view of the Eucharist than a dynamic and participatory one (Campbell: ___ 3). Both the liturgical actuality of greater recourse to Holy Communion and the freeing of sacramental theology from its polemical limitations have let the receiving of the sacrament resume a more prominent place in the theology of the Eucharist.

Of course, the entire celebration of the Mass forms a unity in our experience of worship, irrespective of its historical development.

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ardinal Bernardin opined that the Eucharistic prayers had not fully been appropriated by the congregation and that their participation in the prayer was not optimal until it was effectively signed by their actions within the Communion Rite. "Here [in the Communion Rite] it is clear

that the assembly performs the liturgy; all of us pray the Lord's Prayer, exchange the sign of peace, and join in the litany "Lamb of God," and all are invited to partake of communion" (Bernardin, 17).

That the reception of Holy Communion by the eligible congregants is the climax of the entire Eucharistic Liturgy finds official expression in *This Holy and Living Sacrifice: Directory for the Celebration and Reception of Communion under Both Kinds*, a publication of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. It requires quotation:

Fidelity to the Church's eucharistic doctrine and adherence to the Church's norms and directives concerning the eucharistic celebration interact with one another and express the ancient adage already alluded to, "*lex orandi, lex credendi*." This teaching is nowhere more evident than in that rite toward which the Liturgy of the Word and the eucharistic prayer point, Holy Communion. For Christ gave his body and blood to be eaten and drunk so that all who participate share in the reality of his unique sacrifice and passover made present in sign and symbol in the Eucharist.

The *Directory* is admittedly seeking merely to instance the validity of the ancient maxim of Prosper of Aquitaine, a maxim both self-evident to liturgiologists and interpreted authoritatively by Pius XII in *Mediator Dei* (1947, paragraphs 45-47). The main point of this passage seems to be to keep the Mass unified, for it concludes by saying, "The celebration of Mass. . . is but one single act of divine worship." However, the rite of Holy Communion is here styled as the very object of both the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Prayer.¹ The success of the campaign for frequent Holy Communion in the United States seems to push the American *Directory* into an emphasis, not upon the words of institution or upon the larger Eucharistic prayer, but upon the

¹The footnote to the relevant sentence refers to *The Lectionary for Mass, Introduction* (second typical edition, January 21, 1981), 10. This text is not so unambiguous about exalting Holy Communion. Rather, it uses the gentle phrases, in the official English translation, "banquet of grace" and "eucharist is offered and received."

receiving Holy Communion by the assembled faithful. Declarations that the Eucharistic Prayer is the “high point of the entire celebration” (*GIRM* 10) may place the clerical office too far above lay functions, and similarly may assign the verbal too much importance in a performed ritual whose root action is a meal as Peter Fink insists in his critique of the liturgy sections of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Trent notwithstanding, the reception of Holy Communion is the essence of the sacrament and is the point of the Mass to which it all leads. The Catholic bishops of the United States specify that Christ instituted the Supper as a memorial; thus, Jesus intended that communicants identify thoroughly with his own unique sacrifice. In other words, the whole point of Communion is radical application of the self to the Paschal Mystery in an eminently grateful action.



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