

“EUCHARIST AS COMMUNICATION”

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I. INTRODUCTION

Our annual meeting of bishops responsible for communication in FABC-member conferences and territories (“FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet”) for 2007, the 12th since 1996, was devoted to the communication dimension of the Eucharist. The papers included in this publication comprise the different presentations at that meeting which treat the subject from anthropological, theological but also liturgical perspectives. To place the communication dimension of the Eucharist into Asian culture, a Buddhist Nun was also invited to share the meaning of meals and celebrations in Buddhist culture.

The considerations presented here, however, are not the final word on the matter but should stimulate further thinking and hopefully also deeper theological reflection. We hope to contribute to the 9th FABC Plenary Assembly in 2009, similar to our efforts in Bishops' Meet 2003 on “Family in Communication through the publication of “Communication in the Family” (FABC Paper no. 110), which unfortunately was not considered in the Plenary itself (8th FABC Plenary Assembly Daejeon, Korea 2004).

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

II. EUCHARIST: SUMMIT OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

- Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

The Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) defines communication, on its most profound level, as “giving of self in love”. The highest point of such giving of self in love is reached in Christ’s giving himself for us on the Cross. In the Eucharist, such self-giving is made permanent in Him being present with us until the end of time. All communication of Christ during his apostolic life leads to this moment of self-giving on the Cross and in the Eucharist which must therefore be considered the summit of His communication.

Thus, *Communio et Progressio* rightly says that “In the institution of the Eucharist Christ gave the most perfect, most intimate form of communion between God and people possible in this life and, out of this, the deepest possible unity between people.”(No.11) Pope John Paul II refers to the same in his Apostolic Letter “Rapid Development,” the last document of his life (February 2005), in calling the Eucharistic encounter “a culminating moment in which communication becomes full communion.” He also refers there to the consequence of this when he continues: “By recognizing Jesus in the breaking of the bread (cf. Lk 24,30-31) believers feel themselves urged to announce his death and resurrection, and to become joyful and courageous witnesses of his Kingdom (cf. Lk 24: 35).” (No 6) Thus, the deeper reason for any Christian communication lies in the experience of recognizing the Lord in the breaking of the bread.

From here, we see the Eucharist as THE SUMMIT OF ALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION.

Also, Vatican II’s *Presbyterorum Ordinis* defends this in saying that “the Eucharistic celebration is the center of the assembly of the faithful.” The celebration of the Eucharist employs signs and symbols and different communicative actions which determine the liturgy. The Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* spells this out when it says that the Liturgy “involves the presentation of man’s sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs.” (SC, 7)

Social communication in general can be defined as “sharing meaning through signs.” In the Eucharist, this “meaning” becomes a reality because the Eucharist is, in reality, God’s

presence in His self-giving love in Christ. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* asserts that “in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch and the living bread which gives life to people through His flesh – that flesh which is given life and gives life through the Holy Spirit.” (no.5) The same document calls the Eucharistic celebration “the center of the assembly of the faithful from where also all other communication (teaching) in the Church flows.” Priests are called to go through the trouble of properly cultivating liturgical knowledge and art (!) so that by means of their liturgical ministry God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may be daily more perfectly praised by the Christian communities entrusted to their care.” (ibid.) With reference to “art,” this clearly indicates again the communication dimension of all sacramental ministries, especially the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is also an expression of the unity between believers and with God present in their midst: “In the sacrament of the Eucharistic bread, the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 10,17) is both expressed (> communicated!) and brought about... Sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion (> communication!) with Him and with one another.” (No.7)

In Vatican II understanding (LG, 10) the Eucharist is the “source and summit of Christian life” which reflects in a concrete way the unity of the people of God. This includes also the communication of and in the Christian community.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* of Pope Benedict XVI talks not only about the use of media for transmitting Eucharistic celebrations (No 57) but in a special way also underlines the Eucharistic dimension of mission and witness. “Truly, nothing is more beautiful than to know Christ and to make him known to others. The institution of the Eucharist for that matter, anticipates the very heart of Jesus’ mission: He is the one sent by the Father for the redemption of the world (cf. Jn 3,16-17; Rom 8:32). At the last Supper, Jesus entrusts to His disciples the sacrament which makes present His self-sacrifice for the salvation of us all, in obedience to the Father’s will. We cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission, which beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the Eucharistic form of the Christian life.” (No. 84) “Missionary outreach,” however, is unthinkable without proper and extensive communication.

In a similar way also the “bearing witness by our lives” is a communicative call: “The wonder we experience at the gift God has made to us in Christ gives new impulse to our lives and commits us to becoming witnesses of his love. We become witnesses when we, through our actions, words and way of being (> communication!) make him present to others...” (No. 85) These “actions and words and way of being” are communicative dimensions which were exposed already in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI (1975) as the first means of Evangelization and Communication. (nos. 21, 41, 76)

Cardinal Avery Dulles has studied the documents of Vatican II under the perspective of social communication. He discovered five “Models of the Communicating Church,” between them are the “Sacramental” and the “Koinonia” models. The latter refers to the Church as a living community and people of God (cf. LG, 9-17), Dulles says. While the former shows that “religious communication occurs not only through works but equally through persons and events.” (DV, 2) “Christ Himself is seen as the supreme revelatory symbol, the living image, who renders God in some way visible.” In the Church’s sacrament, and here the Eucharist in a special way, Christ “continues to be present and active” because in the “sacramental mode of communication” Dulles writes “sacred signs produce their saving effect thanks to the power of

Christ.”¹ This is also implied in St. Paul’s words in 1st Corinthians (10,16 f.): “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for all partake in one loaf.”

These “sacred signs” can also be traced in several communicative examples in the life of Jesus Christ Himself pointing to the Eucharistic mystery like --

1. In the multiplication of the bread and the related oral explanations as well as the wedding feast in Cana and other meals in the New Testament (non-verbal and verbal communication).
2. It is reflected in a special way also in the happening of the Last Supper (washing of the feet, bread and wine) as well as in the Passion of the Lord.
3. It is further reflected in the experience of the disciples of Emmaus with the resurrected Lord where they recognized him in the breaking of the bread and in the other meals and celebrations after resurrection.

In reflecting on the Eucharist as “summit of Christian communication” we are challenged to study:

- Meals and celebrations in Asian cultures.
- Artistic expressions of the Eucharist.
- The communication dimension of the liturgy
- Meals and celebrations in the culture of our host country i.e. Buddhism
- Eucharist and Inculturation in Asia

Still to be added could be:

- The role of music as communicative dimension of the Eucharist
- The role of Silence and contemplation
- Possibilities for modern means of communication within or around the celebration of the Eucharist...

Any celebration of the Liturgy has many communicative elements, dimensions and possibilities. Our reflections and insights these days should help us to get a better idea and understanding about these experiences and possibilities in “living the Eucharist” in our Asian context.

III. EUCHARIST IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE - *Sebastian Periannan*

1. New Media Age
2. The context of Eucharist in the New Media age
3. Challenges of the new media
4. Information and faith interfaces

¹ cf. Avery Dulles’ considerations on “symbolic communication” in his *“The Craft of Theology, From Symbol to System”* (1992), Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, pp. 17-40.

5. Communication Dimensions of the Eucharist
6. A Pastoral Orientation

The main objective of this paper is to explore the meaning of the new media age and to expound the communication dimensions of Eucharist towards an authentic Eucharistic experience for a seeker of God from a communication perspective.

This paper presupposes faith in Eucharist, as well as biblical, theological and doctrinal explanations on the Eucharist, though pertinent citations are made, though not delved in depth.

It aims to bring out the (abcd) beauty of adoration, benediction, celebration and devotion of the Eucharist on the one side, and on the other side to enunciate the attraction, beauty, boldness, creativity and dangers of the media in general.

The significance of the paper calls for a deeper faith filled understanding of the Eucharist from a communication and media stand point and to build a better community of love, justice, and peace envisaged by the Eucharistic Lord.

1. What is New Media Age?

Clearly, what happens in cyberspace is directly related to new media: ‘Domains of digital communication and information technologies’, which include ‘the Internet, email, chat rooms, MUDs, (Multi User Domains) digital imaging systems, virtual reality, new biomedical technologies, artificial life and interactive digital entertainment systems.’ The following two tables tell us about the historical development of technologies, social/economic system, function of art and various stages of media and communication down the centuries.

| Technologies | Social / Economic system | Function of Art |
|----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Stone Age | Tribal | Art as magic |
| Bronze Age | Hunter/gatherers | Art as magic |
| Iron Age | Feudalism | Art as ritual |
| Print | Mercantilism | Art as cult of beauty |
| Machine age | Capitalism | Art as art |
| Electronic age | Hyper-capitalism | Art as information [1] |

Six Stages of Media and Communications

| | Oral | Script 3100 BC | Printed 1440s- (Europe) | Wired Electronic 1830s- | Wireless Electronic 1920s- | Digital 1990s- |
|---------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Medium | | Letters, Manuscript | Calendars, Books, newspaper | Telegraph | Radio, television | Computer, Internet |
| Communication | Interactive | Mainly Interactive | One -way | Mainly One- way | Mainly One- way | Two-way |
| Time | Real time | Delayed | Delayed | Immediate | Immediate | Internet time |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Space | Local | Extended Local | Local, extended national | Local, national, increasingly international | Local, national, global | Does not matter |
| Reach | Small audience | Restricted Audience | Mass audience | Mega mass audience | Mega mass audience | All audiences |
| Inclusion | | Literate | Literate | Access based on national infrastructure and affordability | Access based on national infrastructure and affordability | Access and affordability based less on national infrastructure |
| Control | | Church monasteries, courts | Church, courts, printers, bourgeoisie | Governments companies | Governments companies | Governments companies, individuals [2] |

Source: modified from Lull, 2000:38

Players in the new media age as an example

END USER

Online shopper
 Net surfer
 Games player
 Student/pupil
 Information worker
 Journalists
 Writers
 Photographers
 Film-makers
 Musicians
 Artists
 Designer
 Programmer
 Engineer
 Scientist

PRODUCER

P

SURFACE

Invisibility of technology

↑↑

CONTENT GENERATION

↓↓

Visibility of technology

P

DEPTH[3]

Understanding analogue and digital

| <i>Analogue</i> | <i>Digital</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Transparency | Opacity |
| Realism | Montage/collage |
| Linear | Non-linear |
| Non-interactive | Interactive |
| Passive | Active |
| Window on the world | Windowed worlds |
| Perspective | Surface |
| Proscenium | Permeable space |

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Old media</i> | <i>New media[4]</i> |
|------------------|---------------------|

The characteristics of new media is:

- Colourful and technical therefore interesting, informative
- Changing and moving therefore entertaining and creative
- Friendly and fantastic therefore it is educative, instructive
- It is available, affordable and accessible also costly at the moment

It is a best story teller, baby sitter, carrier of news, information, truth, lies, and prejudices, also a vehicle of violence, vulgarity, obscenity, promoter of mediated culture, popularity and profit, disseminator of globalization and offers a ray of hope, faith and charity too. In a nutshell it is noisy, speedy, spooky, stressful as well as comfortable.

Film, fashion, finance on the one side, the other side gun, games and gambling, and in between mail, cell, and bill leading to sexy, crazy, and busy way of life are the hallmark slogans, movements and activities of the media age.

2. The context of Eucharist in the New Media age.

Theological Context: Eucharist as

- Presence and silence in the Eucharist is the source of personal joy
- Reconciliation at interpersonal and community level
- Covenantal meal of a given community celebration
- Relationship and participation resulting in social transformation
- Feast is a Cosmic experience
- Sacrifice is a biblical revelation of the eschatological mystery
- Communion brings the mystical experience

The Eucharist, heart of the Church

The late Holy Father Pope John Paul II wrote: “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the very mystery of the church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise: ‘ Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’” (Mt 28:20) In fact, celebration means fulfilling the words of St. Paul: “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (Eph. 5:18b-20). Every Eucharist is a happy event as God’s life

comes to us: “Father we celebrate the memory of Christ your son” (Euch. Prayer 1) “Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption” (Euch. Prayer VI).

Eucharist as a Meal and Sacrifice:

The Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* rightfully reminds us that we should neither ignore nor unduly emphasize one aspect of the Eucharist over the other: “The constant teaching of the Church on the nature of the Eucharist not only as a meal, but also and pre-eminently as a Sacrifice, is therefore rightly understood to be one of the principal keys to the full participation of all the faithful in so great a Sacrament. For, when stripped of its sacrificial meaning, the mystery is understood as if its meaning and importance were simply that of a fraternal banquet” (RS 38).[5] Jesus identified his body with the bread used at the Last Supper and with the Passover lamb.[6]

Eucharist, a Mystery to be believed:

“The Eucharist is a ‘mystery of faith’ par excellence: ‘the sum and summary of our faith.’[7] Every time the priest proclaims “*Mysterium fidei!*” (Mystery of faith) after consecrating the bread and wine, he expresses his *ever-renewed amazement* at the extraordinary miracle worked at his hands.[8]

The first part while explaining the Eucharist as a mystery to be believed highlights that it is the free gift of the Blessed Trinity. It illustrates mystery of the Eucharist on the basis of its Trinitarian origin. Another striking feature of this exhortation is to present Eucharist as the centre and goal of all the sacramental life (n. 16-29).

Eucharist, a Mystery to be celebrated:

The liturgy is the radiant expression of the paschal mystery. “It is not mere aestheticism, but the concrete way in which the truth of God’s love encounters us and delights us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing us towards our true vocation, which is love”.

Eucharist, a Mystery to be lived:

The love that we celebrate in the Eucharist is not something that we can keep for ourselves. By its very nature, it demands to be shared with all (n. 84).

The Holy Father insists, “The first and fundamental mission that we receive from the sacred mysteries we celebrate is that of bearing witness by our lives” (n. 85).

The relationship between the Eucharistic mystery and social commitment must be made explicit. In this final chapter Pope expresses his concern for humanity, for the poor, displaced people, people affected by social and financial inequalities and all suffering persons (n. 90). Through the Eucharistic spirituality we are invited to sanctify the world and protect the creation. He concludes by invoking the Holy Spirit to kindle within us the same ardour experienced by the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35).

3. Challenges of the new media:

Technological challenges of new media age:

- *Contact* through anonymity and tele + social networking. There are about 300 TV channels, millions of Web sites, more than a billion users of Cell Phone ever increasing than any other medium of the past.
- *Transmission* – working from home, e-shopping. Any one, any time and any where is the slogan of the media.
- *Comprehension* – balance of power between info rich and info poor, celebrity versus audience, politicians versus people, policies versus corruption, media producers' vs users.
- *Acceptance* – freedom of speech, crime, pornography. Everything is taken for granted and accepted without any iota of hesitation. What is the place of Ethics and moral principles?
- *Feedback* – socialization and isolation. Though modern media is two-way and inter active lot of people go unnoticed, ignored and isolated in the family and community. As a result suicide rates and heart failure are in the increase.
- *Internalization* – innovation and depression. Innovation is the key for the modern media but it brings in depression of divide, domination, and suppression of human values.
- *Action* – communication and learning. No doubt it is faster, better and cheaper. But will it help to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, superstition and myths. Action must be oriented towards justice, charity and peace.

Convergence

Henry Jenkins observed (2001), First, there is social or organic convergence, which can be defined as social practices in which we are engaged in more than one level of media attention. Multi-tasking in the workplace would be an equivalent to the organic convergence of watching TV and texting a friend at the same time. Second, Jenkins defines cultural convergence as new forms of cultural creativity at the intersections of media technologies. Third, global convergence recognises that there is two-way 'cultural traffic' in a global communication network, which leads to cultural hybridity.

Technical convergence has re-ordered the toolbox, recasting the separate tools of analogue media into a common digital matrix, allowing sound, image and text to be captured, encoded, edited and outputted in the same technical 'studio' using the same 'apparatus'. [9]

Databases constitute one of the fundamental platforms upon which new media practice takes place, because accessible databases are used in new media to construct interfaces to and multiple pathways through searchable data.

Lovejoy (2004) states that 'the database itself and the three dimensional virtual space it exists in can be thought of as "true" cultural forms.' This is a reference to the World Wide Web and the Internet, seen, metaphorically, as a new form for structuring of cultural experience. Seeing the WWW and Internet as 'the database' amounts to a theoretical leap in which the specificity of different technical databases, scientific, financial and institutional, each with their own codes of access, are collectivised as a unified cultural form. Clearly, the WWW is a major new cultural medium whose forms are, as we write, being worked out through the convergence and remediation of existing media, writing, photography, film-making, games, economic transactions, etc.

Binary opposites used to characterise difference

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Narrative</i> | <i>Database</i> |
| Representation | Information |
| Linear | Non-linear |
| Fiction | Reality |
| Illusion | Control |
| Fixed | Relational |
| Object | Process |
| Author | User |
| <i>Old media</i> | <i>New media</i> [10] |

TV and radio channels partnering with film companies – has benefited each segment of the media industry. New Media, too, is sweeping the net waves. The computer, the mobile phone, satellite-based publicity vehicles, interactivity, web journalism, out-of-home advertising, direct-to-home and CAS broadcast distribution, and a variety of other technological breakthroughs have now brought us to a point where this industry could well become the single largest in some countries economies within the next decade.[11]

“*Information* is power and internet brings it to your finger tips. It has revolutionised our lives, primarily by saving on time – a precious commodity. India as a country has vastly benefited from the internet revolution”, says Rajendra Singh Pawar, chairman, NIIT.

“Today how many people living in the metros actually go to a bank for transaction, or an airline office to purchase a ticket; how many write letters instead of e-mails; and apply for a job in any other way but online? Our lives have been transformed by the internet, and will continue to be altered by this powerful tool,” points out Neelam Dhawan, managing director, Microsoft India.[12]

Blogs exist to give the world a microphone, to make every person an expert.

The problem with blogging, though, is that every person cannot be an expert on everything. If one turns to the Web for authentic or reliable information on anything, one is more likely to get a welter of conflicting perspectives, a veritable Tower of Babel. While it enables millions of people to make themselves heard, blogging, therefore, needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. And while established brands need to fight to sustain their credibility and relevance there will remain a place for them.[13]

Illusions

Richard Barbrook, who explores the subject in *Imaginary Futures – From Thinking Machines to the Global Village*, asserts that after all, if we really considered what has made a difference, “it’s as likely to be soap or the contraceptive pill or antibiotics, which you could argue are more important than the convergence of computing, telecommunications, and the media.

The central idea was that the fusion of broadcasting, computing and telecommunications would create a new – and better – social order. The “information society” came from a U.S. government remix of the ideas of Marshall McLuhan, the professor who coined the phrases “the global village” and “the medium is the message”. We have been living with the belief that technologies “transform society” ever since, he claims.

Moreover, the same idea has been recycled with different terminology for at least four decades. “In the 1970s it was futurology, in the 1980s Silicon valley hype, in the 1990s the dotcom bubble and now we have Web 2.0”.

Mr. Barbrook says it is partly because the concept of the information age came complete with new types of workers who, instead of producing goods and services, would create “knowledge”. He describes these “knowledge workers” along the lines of the Leninist vanguard party: “Lenin always appeals to people on the left selling newspapers because Lenin said the people who sell the newspapers are leading the revolution.”[14]

The insidious influence of the internet, as expected, has created unprecedented upheavals in the minds of children. Till recently, in an affluent school in Mumbai, a group of sixth standard students used to decide on Mondays what each of them would download. Then they would exchange the material through CDs over the weekend. When this subculture was finally exposed, it was discovered that their CDs contained, apart from games, some amount of pornography.

The uncontrollable curiosity of a child now permeates deep into the net and invokes answers that are at once useful and disturbing.

The mushrooming of social networking sites has led to young minds forming their own profiles.[15]

Digital divide and gaps:

The revolutionary developments in IT have brought new contradictions and the digital divide actually combines several gaps:

- i. Technological divide- great gaps in infrastructure and its access;
- ii. Content divide- much of the web-based information is simply not relevant to the real needs of people;
- iii. Gender divide- women and girls have less know-how and access to IT than men and boys; and
- iv. Commercial divide- e-commerce is linking some countries and companies ever more closely, but others run the risk of further marginalisation.(AntonyP Integral liberation p 107)

The Six stages of E-mail:

1. Infatuation - got mail
2. Classification - to the point
3. Distraction - XXX
4. Disenchantment - unanswered mail
5. Accommodation - Y/N, sorry, doubt
6. Death - call me / control

4. Information and faith interfaces

The information age has created some serious challenges to the teaching authority in modern times. The modern scholarship with the help of new technologies has made not merely e-scriptures but also a vast literature on their formation and interpretation, as well as the historical factors influencing the development of doctrines available to the general public. Thousands of websites that are connected to the libraries all over the world bring to the public the day to day progress in scholarship in these fields such as new discoveries, new influences,

changing interpretations etc. Hence any rule or guideline issued by teaching authority today has to be backed up by elaborate study and investigation into its background. No church authority will step today into a predicament similar to what happened in the Galileo issue.

As biblical and historical knowledge spreads deeper, wider and faster among the faithful, they seem to draw inspiration and messages more directly and personally rather than through any intermediary. This tendency is visible in the modern style of personalized understanding of the Bible that we find in informal prayer groups. Thanks to the reach of IT, the teacher has become just one among the several sources of knowledge (and sometimes less efficient than others). One can come across students who have direct access to information through other means and hence have less respect and admiration for their teachers. A similar threat is emerging in the case of the teaching authority of the Church too. People today tend to draw their own conclusions from the knowledge they obtain from numerous sources.[16]

The most obvious use of information technology is simply to store and access information. Even this straightforward application represents a great opportunity to learn about the faith, given the longstanding practical challenge of accessing a literacy patrimony spanning 20 centuries. Catholic researchers have been at the forefront of such work since the 1950s, when Fr. Roberto Busa SJ collaborated with IBM to digitise and index the entire works of Thomas Aquinas. Today, the whole Thomistic corpus can be stored on a single CD, and many similar products are now widely available on CDs or the internet. These include the Holy Bible and many of its translations, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and much else besides.

In my view, this has given rise to two extraordinary opportunities for catechesis. First, we are now able to integrate text and images very easily. Images are important because of the kinds of intellects that we have and because of the nature of the Catholic faith. It is very hard to think about anything without an associated image, and the central teaching of the Catholic faith is that the Word became flesh, that is, something tangible and visible to the senses. Recognizing these truths, much of the Western artistic tradition developed to give visual expression to Catholic theology. Contemporary technology enables us to represent this artistic patrimony anew, to give a rich visual experience of Revelation. We can, for example, take the works of a great artist such as Fra Angelico and use technological cues to show how theological truths are represented in these paintings. Such images are retained in the mind more easily than words alone, and can sometimes express much more than can be said in words.

Second, contemporary information technology is especially powerful for drawing connections between distinct **ideas**. Besides fast cross-referencing, in catechesis such techniques can help to convey a sense of the organic unity of the faith. In particular they can show how scripture, tradition and the magisterium are connected so that “one of them cannot stand without the others”, as Vatican II stated.[17]

One of the downsides of the openness and **anonymity** of the web is that anybody can pretend to be anybody else, even the Pope of Rome. The last time I counted, there were more than 50 fake Benedict XVI pages on MySpace, some respectful, others less so.

The Catholic **Community** website (www.catholic.org.uk) tells surfers about the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Yet your average young web-user takes part in a very different form of penance today; carbon offsetting, where he signs up to one of many green websites and prays forgiveness from Mother Earth for his carbon-sins by donating money for planting trees and shrubs. It isn't only the church message that will be in competition on the web; so will its practices.

People are looking for answers as they surf the web and create their own personal ‘spaces’ – and if the Church thinks it has a Truth to reveal to them, then it ought to get its hands (or at least its typing fingers) dirty.[18]

It is in this vacuum that “the press, radio, TV and video have become other forces which compete with the parents in the education of the young. The mass media, particularly the TV, invade our homes and bring the world in. This widens our horizon but can also insert unwelcome ideas. In many families the parents have abdicated their obligation to educate their children.

With the invasion of the **home** by TV, computer games, internet, children get glued to these electronic forms of entertainment. This is not only bad for their eyes and general health, but also for their emotional growth. Many of these electronic games “involve slaughtering the opponents or destroying them head on. Experts in the field say that this type of entertainment can lead to aggression, increasing levels of depression and emotional confusion among youngsters across the world.”[19]

The media invasion is bad even for the **family** taken as a whole. We are not even together for a meal. Some take their food and sit before the TV. Others have a chat with their friends over the mobile. Still others are trying to download some item on the internet. “We’ve forgotten the magic of sharing a meal with our family members....; it is also important to remember that sharing a meal is not just about eating, but also about strengthening family bonds and making pleasant memories.... The more often families eat together, the less likely that kids are going to smoke, drink, do drugs or get depressed.”[20]

One reason why many **young** people today do not participate in the Eucharist even on a Sunday may be precisely this loss of the deep symbolic function of the meal. We believe the Eucharist gives us the energy we need to resist evil, so too “sociologists stress that the power of eating together is a kind of a vaccine that protects kids.”[21]

With the rapid advances in information technology, we no longer need to go out in search of pornography. It is available always and everywhere. “The family and pornography are poles apart; one contradicts the other.”[22]

Technology brings about acceleration: fast and abundant production, fast food, fast communication, fast transport, and our youth is being sucked into a cesspool of fast ‘love’ and fast ‘dump’. It is a tool of the few powerful people who dictate terms to others. Likewise, “communication technologies are used by the very same few to manipulate information, distort the perspective of values concerning basic needs and wants, and project particular lifestyles.”[23]

5. Communication dimension

Communication is an art, science, and a discipline with its process and scientific method. Communication as a field is endowed with various dimensions, chief among them are:

- a) **Religio-Pastoral** dimension includes all creative and dialogical functions of communication practices of those who follow any religious tenets and carry out pastoral care, concern and love to all the subjects to experience a fuller and meaningful direction and content in life.
- b) **Socio-Cultural** dimension covers all participatory functions of communication acts and events that take place irrespective of caste, colour, creed, race and ethnicity towards the web of inter-personal and inter cultural relationships towards social transformation and harmony.

- c) **Developmental** dimension concentrates on the liberative function of communication on the process of growth and development of people, culture, history, science and technology for a better quality of life.
- d) **Ethical** dimension includes the prophetic function of communication which binds every human being by doing ones duty, witnessing to the truth, and human dignity through conviviality.
- e) **Advocacy** dimension adopts the facilitative function of communication which is supposed to promote good will, human rights, and civil responsibility through every aspect of human communication.

Eucharist as communication

That above mentioned five dimensions and functions of communications could be easily identified and are interlinked and intertwined with the Eucharistic dimensions such as food or meal, sacrifice, covenantal celebration, communion, and sacrament are shown in the following table. Communication dimensions help us to understand Eucharist as communication. In any case these dimensions need not necessarily limit the scope, stifle the depth, and hinder the relevance and the mystical meaning of the Eucharist.

Eucharist as:
Communication Dimension

Food or meal

Sacrifice

Celebration

Communion

Sacrament

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Religio-Pastoral</i> | Eternal Banquet | Spiritual, self-emptying | Reconciliation | Experience of God | Grace |
| <i>Socio-Cultural</i> | Sharing | Freedom & Tolerance | Relationship | Harmony | Peace |
| <i>Developmental</i> | Caring | Mutual Co-operation | Education | Charity | Transformation |
| <i>Ethical</i> | Moral obligation | Talent Management | Human values | Justice | Sense of sacredness |
| <i>Advocacy</i> | Promotional | Networking | Good will | Human rights | Civil Responsibility |

Implications:

a) Creative, dialogic function and Religio-pastoral dimension of the Eucharist stands and offers the eternal heavenly banquet through spiritual renewal, self-emptying, reconciliation, experience of God and grace. “The Eucharistic sacrifice nourishes and increases within us all that we have already received at Baptism with its call to holiness, and this must be clearly evident from the way individual Christians live their lives”. [24]

b) Participatory function and Social dimension of the Eucharist reveals the meaning of sharing the resources, tolerance, understanding, family commitments, communal harmony and peaceful co-existence. Hence, the centrality of the Eucharist in the itinerary of holiness, as the Pontifical Exhortation affirms: “The Eucharist is at the root of every form of holiness, and each of us is called to the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit. How many times Saints have advanced along the way of perfection thanks to their Eucharistic devotion!” [25]

c) Liberative function and Developmental dimension of the Eucharist delivers care to the needy, poor through mutual cooperation for education, charitable activities and transformation of the social systems. “In discovering the beauty of the Eucharistic form of the Christian life, we are also led to reflect on the moral energy it provides for sustaining the authentic freedom of the children of God”.

d) Prophetic function and Ethical dimension of the Eucharist echoes the moral obligation to liberate the marginalised, malnourished through talent management, human values and justice with the sense of sacredness. “Pope John Paul II stated that the moral life has the value of a ‘spiritual worship’ (Rom 12:1; cf. Phil 3:3), flowing from and nourished by that inexhaustible source of holiness and glorification of God which is found in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist: by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ’s self giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all his thoughts and deeds”.

e) Facilitative function and Advocacy dimension of the Eucharist admonishes for promotion of networking among religions, governments, and companies through the exercise of good will, human rights and civil responsibility. This is what the Apostolic Exhortation affirms: “To develop a profound Eucharistic spirituality that is also capable of significantly affecting the fabric of society, the Christian people....should be conscious that they do so in the name of all creation, aspiring to the sanctification of the world and working intensely to that end. The Eucharist itself powerfully illuminates human history and the whole cosmos.....The rite.....leads us to see the world as God’s creation, which brings forth everything we need for our sustenance. The world is not something indifferent....Rather, it is part of God’s good plan, in which all of us are called to be sons and daughters in the Son of God, Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:4-12)”. [26]

6. Pastoral Orientations

Spirituality of the Eucharist is something personal, family and communitarian awareness of the Holy Trinity; reflection of the gift of faith, hope, and love; and an action of conversion, concern and compassion. Eucharistic experience can be achieved through a

formation to follow the Eucharistic Lord, to believe in the resurrected Christ, and to proclaim the Kingdom of the Gospel. The Last Supper event precedes the Manger and anticipates the death and the resurrection. Eucharistic experience has touched the lives of millions including great saints and leaders through an act of immediacy and transparency leading to prophetic mission and eschatological vision.

Inculturation reflects the result of the Incarnation of the Word in history, and hence it is a missionary process in accordance with the dictates of the Holy Spirit and demands of the local culture and global influence.

Prayers, parables, preaching and miracles are the vibrant communication channels.

Mission in the context of global culture of media involves discernment of the Spirit and situation, dialogue with people and religions, and a prophetic liberation of the poor, oppressed, women and children.

Clarity and predictability is achieved through biblical scholarship.

Negativity is faced with unexpected challenges, fundamentalism and heresies.

Importance must be given to Biblical apostolate.

Witnessing is the fruit of the experience of faith formation, spirituality, inculturation and Missionary Orientation. Witnessing through silence, word and deed is more effective than any digitised media of the digital age.

Individuals, communities and Christian nations stand as witnesses.

Communication Experience and reflection:

a) Eucharistic Knowledge

- This celebration aims at denouncing injustices while announcing the ‘programme of life’ offered to us in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:1-12).
- An authentic expression of “God as Our Father” can be experienced in the celebration provided we understand more the Word of God and eat the body and blood of Jesus.
- The digital man wants to see the Church inculturates in the local cultures and deeply rooted in the symbols and communicative expressions. Within the church liturgical celebrations especially homilies should be communicative and respond to the real needs and feelings of people.
- The emergence of fundamentalism, terrorism and consumerism has given rise to insecurity and confrontational situation among various groups of nations and communities. Therefore our celebration should not exhibit fanaticism and fundamentalism rather belief in the Eucharistic Lord.
- Opening this particular site in the Internet may be the result of globalization and communication revolution but it is nothing like participating and celebration the “memory” of Christ in the designated place with the faithful community.
- Since media age is characterised by knowledge society, the knowledge of the Eucharist must be enhanced through appropriate pedagogy and catechesis.

b) Eucharistic Attitude

Our attitude towards the Eucharist must be one of gratitude to God through our offering of thanks and praise.

Eucharist as a dialogue between me and God, my family and God, my community and God helps us to have dialogue with other Christians too.

- A Christian presence and consciousness is created in the intractability of human condition based on the Trinitarian dimension.
- Sinners and Saints stand together but it is, God who judges who is who?
- While representing the Universal appeal to humanity the celebration is singled out as the local concrete cultural experience.
- Eucharist expounds that Jesus is the one and only Saviour while acknowledging the need for a dialogue with different religions.
- With the advent of Satellite/wireless communication and cyber media like Internet, Networks are emerging and they are based on ethnic affiliations and / or common economic interests rather than nations.

c) Eucharistic skill

We need to attend, participate, and celebrate the Eucharist with open mind, clear conscience and sincere heart.

- In the context of the Government / controlled to market driven economies the Eucharistic experience must manifest the “Voice of the Voiceless”, plight of the poor, the marginalised, minorities, indigenous cultures and migrant workers.
- It is an open invitation to anyone who wants to browse on the Eucharist. It offers lots of information on Eucharist, but there is no actual personal experience of Eucharist. I have personally browsed through various sites but all of them provide only information from different angles than the conversion, presence, communion, and renewal for peace and thanksgiving. Therefore, this is a preparation short of actual experience.

d) Eucharistic Value

Values of communion, sense of the community, coming together, sharing and caring are the important values need to be nurtured.

- Consumerist, materialist and hedonistic influences tend to develop cultures without God and deeper values. Therefore a Eucharistic communication must help to keep God and bring Him into the centre of human life, which corresponds very much with human values.
- The Eucharistic celebration in every parish can help develop an approach which serves in a special way local needs, should contribute to a positive acceptance of both urban or rural values. Thus the people will grow from anonymity of community.
- In spite of seeming prosperity and development the gap between the rich and the poor must be addressed. For this the Eucharistic experience should help to realise the importance of human dignity, labour and welfare.
- In the past, young people grew up in societies based on stable, cultural, moral and spiritual traditions. Now, these traditions are very often substituted through different options available to the individual and community. That being the case the Eucharistic celebration challenges us for an open vision and an authentic mission of Christian faith.

e) Eucharistic Spirituality

Eucharistic spirituality is founded on the principles of love, unity and peace.

The digital world calls us to be witnesses that of “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) Eucharist as an analogue and digital communication communicates the “Living Water”, (Jn 4:10-15) “bread of life” (Jn 6:35) eternal life, namely, the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent (cf. Jn 17:3). As Pope John Paul II exhorts, “Catholics need to work with the members of other Churches and ecclesial communities and with the followers of other religions to ensure a place for spiritual and moral value in the media”. [27]

Recommendation :

A) Adoration: Adoration is “Christo”-centric in nature and “Marian” in culture. “Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us” The Eucharist is a priceless treasure: by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass We are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of Grace. (EE no25) Every teaching on the Eucharist should begin with an act of faith in the real presence of Jesus. Adoration means keeping silence and contemplating on the mysteries of God like Mary “the woman of the Eucharist”, (EE 53) “she treasured all these messages and continually pondered over them” (Lk 2: 19, 51) Unless, we Christians contemplate like Mary, we can not experience and share the joy of the Gospel to others. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament offers light and enlightenment to the hearts and the minds of the adorer.

B) Benediction: Each human being is in need of the vision and the “image” of God through the “Abba” experience of Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament. “For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth....Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love” (EE no 1) We need to truly experience in depth and extent God’s saving action in the paschal mystery of Christ in us and in our communities in the liturgy. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament blesses the individuals and the community with healing, prosperity and peace. Today’s culture being dominated by images and image building culture, we need the image of the Benediction from the Sacrament of Eucharist.

C) Celebration: The “Pascal mystery” as the basis and the “Pentecostal” history as the foundation is the celebration of the Eucharist. The Church, the Christians, did have the Eucharist as the centre of their lives in the early centuries. The martyrs of Abitina who violated the law with regard to the Sunday Eucharist, replied to their accuser Emperor: “We can not live without the Sunday Lord’s Supper” and “Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 31) (EE 6). This experience of Sunday Mass means living communion, which binds us all together in Jesus Christ. We need to learn to truly express our relationships with God and with one another in the liturgy through words, silences, songs, gestures and actions. Celebration of the Eucharist celebrates the very gift of life, truth, justice and charity offered by Our Lord through His death and resurrection. It is a very celebration of unity because it is a sacrament of Unity. As Pope

Benedict XVI asserts in his homily, we can encounter him only together with all others. We can only receive him in Unity”.

D) Devotion: As the Vatican Council teaches: “ These devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonise with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy! are in some way derived from it and lead the people to it. Since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them” (SC 13)!. We need to spare no pains to strive to be inspiring animators of our liturgical celebrations. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist or the Blessed Sacrament deepens the faith of the devotee to respect and serve the other in need. In the Encyclical on the Eucharist *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II urged the entire Church to live true and real “Eucharistic Wonder”. Devotion to most Holy Eucharist leads every single human being to become more humanly matured, emotionally balanced, intellectually awakened, and above all spiritually renewed and committed.

E) Eucharist and Cyberspace: The Church clearly states, “virtual reality is no substitute for the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the sacramental reality of the other sacraments, and shared worship in a flesh-and-blood human community. There are no sacraments on the Internet; and even the religious experiences possible there by the grace of God are insufficient apart from real-world interaction with other persons of faith.” (*The Church and Internet*; 2002, Part 1, No. 2)

WEBSITES

Websites have become so integral to our lives that I wonder whether the term ‘new media’ is appropriate for it anymore. Eg. <http://www.vatican.va>

BLOGS

A blog is literally a publicly accessible only diary of individuals. Some of them are news-based, some personal reflections, some controversial, some humorous and some intellectual; yet all of them have challenged, informed, inspired, corrected and sometimes even scared me. Eg. <http://insightscoop.typepad.com>

PODCASTS

A podcast is actually an audio or video file which is regularly broadcasted over the internet for its subscribers. Eg., Technopriest: <http://www.technopriest.org/index.xml>

VIDEO SHARING PORTALS

Today many sites, such as GodTube (Godtube.com) and EJVideo (ejvideo-place.blogspot.com) have been created to provide specific Christian or Catholic contents to viewers.

FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

People, both young and old, are finding new acquaintances, building communities, and ‘scapping’ away. Sites like Facebook, MySpace, Linkedin etc. are drawing more and more subscribers.

MOBILE NETWORKING

Receiving emails, conferencing, viewing videos and even watching television on a mobile phone has become common.

End Notes:

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- [22] Paul J. Murphy, *"The effects of pornography on family life,"* *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, 82-1 (October 1981), pp. 55-61, here p. 55.
- [23] Catherine B. Haliburn, *The Family and the Child: The Asian Family's struggle for Life*, *FABC Papers*, 72f. Hong Kong: FABC, 1995, p. 10.
- [24] Pope Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Exhortation 'Sacramentum Caritatis'*, no. 79
- [25] *Ibid.*, no. 94
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IV. MEALS AND CELEBRATIONS IN ASIAN CULTURES - *S. M. Michael, svd*

1. Introduction

"Tell me what you eat, and I'll tell you who you are," wrote renowned gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in 1825. Food is a very important and necessary part of our lives. It sustains us, giving meaning, order, and values to our lives. Food reflects the symbolism in our

ideological systems. Sharing food has been a way for people of all cultures to create and sustain a bond with others. It also plays an important part in our identity construction, our religious practices, and our socialization. It is a vital part in our celebrations.

We use food for a variety of purposes and the food that we choose to eat is selected because of many different influences. In many religions, food is a communicative symbol where we experience and perceive God's love and life. Foodways can thus tell us a lot about the society in which they play a part. This paper will highlight the facts that we communicate messages by means of as well as about food, and we can look at foodways to discern cultural presuppositions underlying our communicative styles and religious experiences.

2. Food, Meals and Culture

All living organism need to sustain themselves to be alive. But, our human sustenance takes a form of culture. Food becomes a meal through a process of culture. Even animals need to eat food but this food becomes a meal for human beings because of its cultural moorings. It is in the first few years of a child's life that the mother and other members of the family teach it to discriminate between food and non-food, and how, when and in what order to eat it. These rules we carry with ourselves throughout our life though we might modify or change them as we go along.

Consuming food is a cultural activity, which has several symbolic meanings. We eat food because we need it to live, it is what gives us the nutrients that we need for our bodies to grow. Another reason we eat food is because of psychological reasons. If we are happy, we eat; if we are sad, we eat; boredom, depression, and loneliness are other reasons that we eat. Communities are kept together with the cultural and symbolic meaning of food (Humphrey, 1991.). We use food for social needs. When we have friends, usually we have some form of food to offer them, whether it is a light snack or a full meal. Food items themselves have meaning attached to them.

Normally, People who have the same culture share the same food habits, that is, they share the same assemblage of food variables. Peoples of different cultures share different assemblages of food variables. We might say that different cultures have different food choices (Brown, 1984). All the same, within the same culture, the food habits are not at all necessarily homogeneous. In fact, as a rule they are not. Within the same general food style, there are different manifestations of food variables of a smaller range, for different social situations. People of different social classes or occupations eat differently. People on festive occasions, in mourning, or on a daily routine eat again differently.

Different religious sects have different eating codes (Penner, 1991). Men and women, in various stages of their lives, eat differently. These variations may be influenced by the natural resources that are available for its use. All the same, food is not everything in the environment which can be used for sustaining and nourishing the human body. The environment only sets the limits and provides challenge to human ingenuity. Certain items, animal, vegetable and mineral, are selected by the culture as fit for human consumption and many others as not. In most cases, the selected items are consumed after being processed in certain ways which are again prescribed by culture.

3. Food, Culture and Communication

The role of food in different cultures throughout time and in all parts of the world is very interesting and revealing how societies and cultures have been communicating with the symbolism of food. Beyond merely nourishing the body, what we eat and with whom we eat can

inspire and strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and even countries. There is no closer relationship than kin, and food plays a large part in defining family roles, rules, and traditions.

What we consume, how we acquire it, who prepares it, who is at the table, and who eats first is a form of communication that is rich with meaning. Food participates in multiple symbolic systems in a society. To discern some of the meanings that can be read into the patterning of food in a meal will reveal to us the communicative characteristic of food and meal. Choices people make with respect to what, when, where, and how they eat is related to the cultural communication of that community with regard to social relationship of that society.

Nations or countries are frequently associated with certain foods. People also connect to their cultural or ethnic group through similar food patterns. Immigrants often use food as a means of retaining their cultural identity. People from different cultural backgrounds eat different foods. The ingredients, methods of preparation, preservation techniques, and types of food eaten at different meals vary among cultures.

In addition to impacting food choices, culture also plays a role in food-related etiquette. People in Western societies may refer to food-related etiquette as table manners, a phrase that illustrates the cultural expectation of eating food or meals at a table. Some people eat with forks and spoons; more people use fingers or chopsticks. However, utensil choice is much more complicated than choosing chopsticks, fingers, or flatware. Among some groups who primarily eat food with their fingers, diners use only the right hand to eat. Some people use only three fingers of the right hand. Among other groups, use of both hands is acceptable. In some countries, licking the fingers is polite; in others, licking the fingers is considered impolite (and done only when a person thinks no one else is watching). Rules regarding polite eating may increase in formal settings.

The amount people eat and leave uneaten also has symbolic meaning in cultures. Some people from Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian countries might leave a little bit of food on their plates in order to indicate that their hunger has been satisfied (Kittler 2001). Cooks from other locations might be offended if food is left on the plate, indicating that the guest may have disliked the food. Similarly, a clean plate might signify either satisfaction with the meal or desire for more food.

Even the role of conversation during mealtime varies from place to place. Many families believe that mealtime is a good time to converse and to "catch up" on the lives of family and friends. Among other families, conversation during a meal is acceptable, but the topics of conversation are limited. In some Southeast Asian countries it is considered polite to limit conversation during a meal (Kittler 2001).

4. Symbolic Meaning of Food in Asian Cultures

Food has many symbolic meanings. It has a symbol of hospitality, status, welcome and acceptance. In her book *Welcoming Ways*, Andrea Alban Gosline describes dozens of culinary customs from around the globe. In Uzbekistan mothers whisper these words to their new babies: "My little meat, my little fat, my little honey, my grasshopper, my tiny moon, light of my eyes."

In China, Red eggs are incorporated into the naming and welcome ceremony when the baby is one month old. In the Chinese tradition food and health go together. Food not only affects health as a matter of general principle, the selection of the right food at any particular time must also be dependent upon one's health condition at that time. Food, therefore, is also medicine. The Chinese way of eating is further characterized by the ideas and beliefs about food,

which actively affect the ways in which food is prepared and taken. Indeed, perhaps one of the most important qualifications of a Chinese gentleman was his knowledge and skill pertaining to food and drink (Simoons, 1991).

In India, food is not exchanged between unequal castes. Food is a symbol of hierarchical status as well as equality. There are minute rules as to what sort of food or drink can be accepted by a person and from what castes. Traditionally, the practices in the matter of food and social intercourse divided the people of India into different segments. Social customs relating to food divided the people of India into five groups. First, the twice born castes consisting of mainly Brahmins; the second, those castes at whose hands the twice-born can take “Pakka” food; third, those castes at whose hands the twice-born cannot accept any kind of food but may take water; fourth, castes that are not untouchable yet are such that water from them cannot be used by the twice-born; last come all those castes whose touch defiles not only the twice-born but any orthodox Hindu. All food is divided into two classes, “Kachcha” and “Pakka”, the former being any food in the cooking of which water has been used, and the latter all food cooked in butter (“ghi”) without the addition of water. As a rule a man will never eat “Kachcha” food unless it is prepared by a fellow caste-man, which in actual practice means a member of his own endogamous group, whether it be caste or sub-caste, or else by his Brahmin “Guru” or spiritual guide. But in practice most castes seem to take no objection to “Kachcha” food from a Brahmin. A Brahmin can accept “Kachcha” food at the hands of no other caste. As for the “Pakka” food, it may be taken by a Brahmin at the hands of some of the castes only. A man of higher caste cannot accept “Kachcha” food from one of the lower, though the latter may regale himself with similar food offered by a member of one of the castes accepted to be higher than his own (Ghurye, 1932:7). Thus food is a symbol of hierarchy of castes.

5. Participation in a Meal is the Celebration of Renewal of Relationships

Eating is a social act, and one of the marks or symbols of a family is eating together. Food is also a part of our many celebrations. In many cultures in Asia, eating together by its family members is an important value. Similarly in American Samoa most family activities and ceremonies center on eating. A host family demonstrates its prosperity or societal rank by providing large quantities of food (Shovic 1994). However, the way that food is used in celebrations varies from home to home, state to state, and country to country. The celebrations that we have and the ways that we celebrate them are affected by our culture (Fieldhouse, 1986: 3).

Thus, gathering around a table, uniting as friends and family is an important aspect of food and celebrations. Food and celebrations unite people in the same family, giving them a common bond. A celebration of all sorts, and the food that adorns them brings people from all over the world closer together around one table. When we celebrate it is usually with people we love and trust, or are trying to get to know. Food is a powerful element that can bring together many different people. The smell of food also is powerful in that it is able to bring old memories and events to mind, a certain meal and its smell can remind a person of home.

6. Meal is a Celebration of Life Linked to Rites of Passage

i) Life is a Celebration

Celebrations in families and societies are marked with rites of passage, and at the height of every rite of passage there is a celebration of a community meal. Participating in the meals of the celebration of a family (rites of passage) or any other

celebration means participating in the joy and sorrows and the very struggle of life of a family or a community. Let us elaborate on this point.

In all cultures, life is a celebration of giving meaning to different events of human existence. Life is experienced as pulsating and rhythmical. It is a combination of breaks and re-unions. Rituals and rites are the means by which these experiences of life are communicated. Most of these rites and rituals are filled with meaning, giving an interpretation to the process of life. Hence, experiences of humankind are heavily embedded in cultural symbols, particularly those of rituals and celebrations. These rites and rituals help the members of the community to encounter the changes in their own life and in the environment. As it will be shown shortly, meal is an essential part and the culmination and completion of the celebration of the rites of passage of a community. Community meals are connected to these rituals, symbols and myths.

In order to be alive and active a culture has to relive its experiences. This means the experiences which are stroed in rituals must be enacted, myths recited, narratives told, events of importance celebrated. These enactments, recitals, tellings and performances transform and enable the people involved to re-experience the heritage of their culture. "Life consists of retellings" (Bruner 1986:12). It is in this sense that meals which form a part and parcel of a community ritual is a celebration of that community.

ii) Meals and Celebrations are Essential Part of Rites of Passage

Every individual in a society undergoes different phases of life such as birth, puberty, adulthood, old-age and death. From birth till death human beings take up different positions in life such as childhood, youth, marriage and parenthood. All these changes and positions in life involve different responsibilities and each such change disturbs the individual's equilibrium in relationship within his family and society. A person's ability to handle these situations are marked with uncertainties. Hence, these disturbances which involve marked changes in the habitual interaction rates of an individual are known as crisis (Chapple and Coon 1942:484). Every culture meets these crisis situations through various rituals so that an individual may pass through these stages without much stress and strain. These rites and rituals are called rites of passage by the well known social scientist Arnold van Gennep (Cf. Gennep 1960). These rites and rituals literally mark the passage of an individual from one state in his relations with other people to an another state.

The purpose of these rituals and celebrations are to transform an individual from one stage of life to another. These rites and celebrations are seen as both indicators and vehicles of transition from one socio-cultural state and status to another – childhood to maturity, virginity to marriage, childlessness to parenthood, sickness to health, death to ancestry, and so on. These ceremonies and specific rites also pay an important role in the ordering and reordering of social relations (Gluckman 1962:4).

For example, in the Dravidian cultures when a girl comes of age, her movements and interactions are restricted; she is confined to her home for a certain period of time until a number of rites and rituals are performed (Diehl 1956:185). These rites and rituals are aimed at changing the quality of time and staus for the girl who has come of age as well as for the members of the family. The girl is no more an ordinary small girl. She is different now. This change of status in her life and for the members of the family and relations mark with rituals of Rites of Passage. In the words of Kimball, "The person

who enters a status at variation with the one previously held becomes “sacred” to the others who remain in the profane state. It is this new condition which calls for rites eventually incorporating the individuals into the group and returning him to the customary routines of life. These changes may be dangerous, and at least, they are upsetting to the life of the group and the individual. The transitional period is met with rites of passage which cushion the disturbance” (1960:ix). Similarly, in other life-crisis rituals such as marriage, death, etc. the rites of passage changes the quality of time for the people who are undergoing these rituals. At the culmination of every rites of passage there is a celebration marked with a community meal.

Van Gennep saw “regeneration” as a law of life and of the universe: the energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals. For him, this regeneration is accomplished in the social world by the rites of passage given expression in the rites of death and renewal of life. The essential part of this regeneration is a community meal which renews the community itself and the intimate relationships of the members of a community.

Let us take an example from Korean Culture. Naming of a child is a rite of passage which accompanies a festive meal. In Korean culture, there are prescribed rules, timing, rites and procedures in the naming of a child. After a lapse of some time a child is named. For a boy a temporary name, called a birth name, was to be replaced by a proper name upon attaining majority. A girl would have no childhood name.

On the 100th day after the birth, a sumptuous banquet is held. If the child is the first and male, the banquet is especially elaborate. Many varieties and large quantities of food are prepared and a large number of guests are invited. Parents also present rice cakes to the neighbours. The guests invited to the 100th day party come with presents, often in the form of gold rings.

On the first birthday of a child another big party is given, which is called the “*tol*” banquet. The child is dressed as resplendently as possible, often to its dismay and discomfort, and is set before a “*tol*” table with an assortment of rice cakes and symbolic items such as a hank of yarn, money, stationery, and a book. The adults enjoy predicting the child’s fortune as the child picks one of the items. If it picks the yarn it is supposed to live long; if the writing-brush it is presumed to possess a scholarly talent, and if money it will be blessed with wealth, etc. (see Korean Overseas Information Service, 1978:328-329).

When this routine is over, relatives and acquaintances are invited to enjoy the food, and the congratulations and presents of the guests are given.

Similarly celebrations of other rites of passage also follow a festive meal. In Korean culture, marriage is considered the most important single event for the entire family as well as the bride and groom, to be witnessed by many acquaintances and close relatives. The marriage celebration is marked by a family meal with relatives and friends (see Korean Overseas Information Service, 1978:328-329).

The food chosen during these celebrations will depend upon the cultural meaning of food in each society. To narrate this point, I draw examples from India and China in the next section of this paper.

iii) Meals and Celebrations are Essential Part of the Cyclical Rituals

Van Gennep applied his system of “regeneration” to the analysis of feast and festivals in all cultures. Every feast and festival is characterized by the celebration of a community or a family meal. As we just saw, Van Gennep found regeneration is very essential in every society. Cyclical rituals are part of this regeneration.

In almost all human societies work and life tend to be governed by seasonal and ecological rhythms. Changes in the environment, such as the alteration of the seasons and even the succession of day and night, the phases of the moon, or the progression of the seasons in their annual cycle involve a disturbance of all the members of a group. They are crises because in many societies, the food supply and the means of livelihood are so dependent upon the vagaries of the environment and its climatic conditions that these human groups live in a perpetual state of anxiety and uncertainty. Moreover the changes in nature exert an alteration in the occupational rhythm of life. Consequently, these changes involve a readjustment of the interaction rates.

For example, in a country like India which is predominantly agricultural, important crisis, that is, crisis which involve relatively great changes of interaction rates, come in the spring at planting time, and in the fall at harvest. Some of the extensive cyclical rituals, such as the harvest rites, mark the end of a period of technical activity; others like planting ceremonies, mark the beginning of such a period. The ritual techniques used in these crisis enable individuals affected by the changes to build up the new interaction rates needed to restore their equilibrium. Human life need to be adjusted to these changes in nature. Accordingly every culture marks culturally recognized points in the passage of time such as first fruits, harvest, mid-summer, new year, new moon, etc. (cf. James 1961).

Normally, the “Rites of Passage” are associated with non-periodic changes such as birth and death, illness, and so on. The “Cyclical Rituals” on the other hand, are usually connected with the periodic changes; the daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly changes which are associated with changes in technology through the alteration of day and night and of the seasons. Most characteristically, however, the non-periodic changes producing the rite of passage affect a single individual specially, and the rest of the group only through their relations with him, while those producing the Cyclic Rituals affect all the members of the group together. These rites, coming periodically, help to reinforce the habitual relations within the society. E.D. Chappell and C.S. Coon (1942) call these rites and rituals as “rites of intensification”, since the goal of these celebrations is the strengthening of group unity.

These rites which accompany and bring about the change of year, season, or month are also, according to Van Gennep, ceremonies of passage. Certain feasts and festivals in different parts of Asia and in other geographical areas of the world may include rites of expulsion of winter and incorporation of spring – the one dies and the other is reborn (Gennep 1960:178-180).

Invariably the celebration of these feast and festivals are marked with food symbolism in the meals of their culture. We will study some of them in Asian Cultures.

7. Quality of a Meal Influences the Personality of People

As pointed out above, the food chosen during the community celebrations at the rites of passage will depend upon the cultural meaning of food in each society. Many cultures in Asia

consider that there is an intimate relationship between the type of meals (food) we take and our personality. To narrate this point, I darw examples from India and China.

i) Food and Celebration in Indian Culture

In India food is classified into different psychological qualities based on the nature of food into hot and cold. There is also a classification of diets on the basis of their compatibility with certain life-styles which are arranged hierarchically. *Satva* (righteous), *rajas* (energetic) and *tamas* (inactive) are three dominant qualities or virtues, and one who aspires to. Hence according to the hierarchy of caste, and according to the psychological qualities expected in their behaviour, different castes will choose food items in their meals in any celebration. An individual or a caste group which aspires to lead a satvic life-style must be vegetarian, teetotaler, and s/he or the caste group has to avoid, among other things, garlic and onion. They must also avoid chillies, and highly spiced food. Many upper caste Hindus, especially Brahmins, people who follow Jain religion and holy men regard vegetarianism as the only diet compatible with that condition of living.

'*Rajas*' food includes meat-eating and the spices, and is regarded as appropriate to those doing manual labour, and for soldiers and others who have to live by using physical force or violence.

'*Tamas*' is gluttony especially in spicy meats and liquor. This type of food is regarded as part of an overall sensuous life-style.

The different caste communities according to their caste regulations choose food which is appropriate in their celebrations (Srnivas, 1984:107).

ii) Food and Celebration in Chinese Culture

The Chinese meals in celebrations are based on its distinctive understanding of food and health. The Chinese's underlying principles in meal preparation is based on the bodily functions the yin-yang principles. Many foods are also classifiable into those that possess the yin quality and those of the yang quality. When yin and yang forces in the body are not balanced, problems result. Proper amounts of food of one kind or the other may then be administered (i.e., eaten) to counterbalance the yin and yang disequilibria. If the body were normal, overeating of one kind of food would result in an excess of that force in the body, causing diseases. Hence, food selected in celebrations take the above aspects of dietary principles (Simoons, 1991).

At least two other concepts belong to the native Chinese food tradition. One is that, in consuming a meal, appropriate amounts of both fan and ts'ai should be taken. In fact, of the two, fan is the more fundamental and indispensable. The other concept is frugality. Overindulgence in food and drink is a sin of such proportions that dynasties could fall on its account (Simoons, 1991).

8. Meals and Celebrations at Cyclical Rituals in Asian Cultures

As pointed out above, in Asia too, the different cultural communities have developed their own rites and rituals for centuries to giving meaning to their life experience in terms of linear and cyclic rituals. The culmination of these celebrations are marked with community or family meals. We will see some of the meals connected to cyclical rituals in Asian cultures.

i) In Chinese Culture

Celebration of the New Year is a cyclical ritual in all cultures. In Chinese culture, it is very elaborate. This is celebrated with a special festive meal. It is a time to gather with family, honor ancestors and celebrate with a big banquet that symbolizes prosperity in the New Year.

Most of the dishes served during Chinese New Year (also known as Spring Festival) are symbolic of something positive, hopeful and indicating newness of life. Chicken and fish, for example, symbolize happiness and prosperity--especially when served whole. Dishes made with oranges represent wealth and good fortune because they are China's most plentiful fruit. Noodles represent longevity; therefore, they should never be cut! Duck symbolizes fidelity, while eggs signify fertility. Bean curd or *tofu*, however, is avoided because its white color suggests death and misfortune.

Dishes are also chosen based on homonyms--words that either are spelled the same or sound the same as other words. Fish (*yu*) is served because it sounds similar to the Chinese word for plenty; whole fish represents abundance. Turnips are cooked because their name (*cai tou*) also means "good luck."

Another popular Chinese New Year dish is *jiaozi*, dumplings boiled in water. In some areas of China, coins are placed in the center of *jiaozi*. Whoever bites into one of these dumplings will have an exceptionally lucky year.

The Chinese celebrations include certain specific items of food. This food in celebrations is related to the symbolic meaning of that food item. The symbolic significance of a food may be based on its appearance or on how the Chinese word for it sounds. Here are several symbolic Chinese foods:

a) Eggs

Eggs hold a special symbolic significance in many cultures, and China is no exception. The Chinese believe eggs symbolize fertility. After a baby is born, parents may hold a "red egg and ginger party," where they pass out hard boiled eggs to announce the birth. (In some regions of China the number of eggs presented depends on the sex of the child: an even number for a girl, and an odd number if a boy has been born).

b) Noodles

Noodles are a symbol of longevity in Chinese culture. They are as much a part of a Chinese birthday celebration as a birthday cake with lit candles is in many countries. Since noodles do symbolize long life, it is considered very unlucky to cut up a strand.

c) Fish

Although westerners sometimes balk at the sight of a entire fish lying on a plate, in China a fish served whole is a symbol of prosperity. In fact, at a banquet it is customary to serve the whole fish last, pointed toward the guest of honor. Fish also has symbolic significance because the Chinese word for fish, *yu*, sounds like the word for riches or abundance, and it is believed that eating fish will help your wishes come true in the year to come.

d) Duck

Chinese wedding banquet is marked with a mouthwatering platter of Peking duck on the banquet table. Ducks represent fidelity in Chinese culture. Also, red dishes are featured at weddings as red is the color of happiness. (You'll find them served at New Year's banquets for the same reason.)

e) Chicken

In Chinese culture, chicken forms part of the symbolism of the dragon and phoenix. At a Chinese wedding, chicken's feet (sometimes referred to as phoenix feet) are often served with dragon foods such as lobster. Chicken is also popular at Chinese New Year, symbolizing a good marriage and the coming together of families (serving the bird whole emphasizes family unity).

f) Seeds (lotus seeds, watermelon seeds, etc)

During the Chinese New Year celebration Chinese eat snacks with different types of seeds in them. The seed-filled treats represent bearing many children in Chinese culture.

g) Fruit - Tangerines, Oranges and Pomelos

Tangerines and oranges are passed out freely during Chinese New Year as the words for tangerine and orange sound like luck and wealth, respectively. As for pomelos, this large ancestor of the grapefruit signifies abundance, as the Chinese word for pomelo sounds like the word for "to have."

h) Cake

The sweet, steamed cakes are so popular during the Chinese New Year season. Cakes such as Sticky Rice Cake have symbolic significance on many levels. Their sweetness symbolizes a rich, sweet life, while the layers symbolize rising abundance for the coming year. Finally, the round shape signifies family reunion.

ii) In India Culture

In India, there is no one New Year celebration. Each cultural groups have their own New Year in their respective annual calendar at different times of the year. Hence, it is impossible to narrate meal pattern for all the cultural groups of India. Hence, an example of only one cultural group is given here, namely Maharashtra.

Maharashtra is one of the linguistic states in India located at the middle west of Indian subcontinent. The people of this State speak Marathi as their mother tongue and belong to that culture. Among them celebration of a new year is to mark a new beginning. It is known as Gudhi – Padawa. It is the first day (Shuddha Pratipada) of the month of Chaitra. This new beginning is marked by a custom of erecting a long bamboo decorated with a silk-cloth and silver-vessel, a garland of sweets and neem-leaves. This is called Gudhi. After worshipping the Gudhi, it is taken down in the evening after sunset and sweet from the garland is distributed among the children. The meal of that day contains sweets. One peculiar custom, which characterizes Gudhi-Padawa, is the eating of neem-leaves before taking of the sweetmeats.

Celebration of the New Year teaches us that we need a constant transformation, renewal and rejuvenation. We need constant revision and criticism of our previous orderings of thought and behaviour. It is the celebration of life and death. During the celebration of the Gudhi-Padawa eating of neem-leaves before taking of the sweetmeats is very special. This reminds people, at the beginning of the New Year, that life is made up of both joys and sorrows, and we need to be ready to face both (Thomas, 1971:3-4).

9. Divine Meal in Asian Religions

Food has a symbolic meaning in almost all religions. In some religions such as Judaism, Hinduism and Christianity the eating of regular meals is intertwined with ritual acts. In the Hindu family, among the higher castes the morning meal is first offered to the domestic deities before being consumed. Eating must also be undertaken wherein a ritually pure condition, and a greater degree of purity is required while cooking. The kitchen is one of the “purest” places in a Hindu house (Srinivas, 1984: 103).

Around the world, Muslims fast during Ramadan, believed to be the month during which the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book, was given from God to the Prophet Muhammad. During this month, Muslims fast during daylight hours, eating and drinking before dawn and after sunset. Orthodox Jews follow dietary laws, popularly referred to as a kosher diet, discussed in Jewish scripture. The dietary laws, which describe the use and preparation of animal foods, are followed for purposes of spiritual health (Rhodes, Web online).

Many followers of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism are vegetarians, in part, because of a doctrine of noninjury or nonviolence. Abstinance from eating meat in these traditions stems from the desire to avoid harming other living creatures. Though not more than about 28 % of the population are vegetarians in India, in spite of this vegetarians have a high ritual status in India, and are extremely articulate (Srinivas, 1984:105).

Meal binds the members of a religious community. It is a custom among the Muslims to sit for a common festival meal along with the guests around a large plate, in the middle of which all the food is kept. The guests as well as hosts eat together by drawing the portion that each one likes to consume. On feast days, Muslims will normally send a piece of cooked mutton also to the houses of the neighbours who may belong to other religious traditions.

In India, among some tribes, there is a ritual meal around a reconciliation experience. It could happen that a boy from one clan has fallen in love and eloped with a girl from another clan, which union is normally forbidden. This makes the tribes enemies of each other, and tensions rise. If normalcy has to be restored, it is arranged that the elders first come together and discuss what has happened and how the problem is to be solved. When the dialogue succeeds, both the clans celebrate with a meal as a sign of reconciliation and mutual trust.

In the South of India, there lives a tribal community known as Todas. Two basic principles rule their community, namely a) A woman is impure, b) The buffalo is very sacred. In their culture, the buffalo is normally is not killed and consumed for food. However, once a year, a prize buffalo is killed and the entire communities consumes it as a festival. It is believed by them that this meal helps them to have the life of the divinity within themselves.

The Sikh religious community in India has a special community meal in their tradition. The Hindus have a concept of “Prasad” (Divine Food) in their religious traditions. Let us elaborate on these two types of Divine Food.

a) Langar (Community Meal of the Sikhs)

Langar (in Punjabi language) is the term used in the Sikh religion for the free, vegetarian food served in a Gurdwara and eaten by everyone sitting as equals. Langar is also a fundamental element of Sufism, especially the Chishti Order. Langar is served in the precincts of a Sufi Dergah in the Langar Khana and is served out of a massive pot called a "Deg," and is not necessarily vegetarian. Langar is also a practice of the Ravidasi faith, and follows the same format as the Sikh practice (<http://www.searchsikhism.com/institution.html>).

The Sikh Langar or free kitchen was started by the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak. It is designed to uphold the principle of equality between all people of the world regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status. In addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of Langar expresses the ethics of sharing, community, inclusiveness and oneness of all humankind. "...the Light of God is in all hearts."

At Langar, only vegetarian food is served. This is done to ensure that all people, with whatever dietary restrictions will feel welcome to eat as equals.

The institution of "Guru ka Langar" has served the community in many ways. It has ensured the participation of Sikhs in a task of service for mankind, even Sikh children help in serving food to the participants of Langar. Langar also teaches the etiquette of sitting and eating in a community situation, which has played a great part in upholding the virtue of sameness of all human beings; providing a welcome, secure and protected sanctuary.

Everyone is welcome to share the Langar; no one is turned away. The food is normally served twice a day, every day of the year. Each week a family or several families volunteer to provide and prepare the Langar. This is very generous, as there may be several hundred people to feed, and caterers are not allowed. All the preparation, the cooking and the washing-up is also done by voluntary helpers.

The Sikh Gurus exhorted their followers to regard everyone as their own brother. We are brothers born of the same father. 'Our Father is one and we are all his children.' We are members of one family. All the Gurus showed in actual life how this percept of the 'Brotherhood of Man' was to be lived out; the free kitchen is perhaps the best demonstration of the same Love and active sympathy for the downtrodden. The free kitchen is an institution where these noble ideals can be practiced. A Sikh Gurdwara is a central place of worship and langar is a place for serving each other. In a langar a mingling of all classes is provided and in dining together realization of the truth 'all food is gift of God and that prejudices about it are entirely invalid'.

b) Prasad (Hinduism – Prasad- Divine Food)

Prasāda (Sanskrit), prasād/prashad (Hindi), Prasāda in (Kannada), prasādam (Tamil) or prasadam (Telugu) is both a mental condition of generosity, as well as a material substance that is first offered to a deity (in Hinduism) and then consumed.

Prasada is the sacred food offering of the Lord. During Kirtans (Singing hymns), worship, Puja, Havan and Arati, the devotee offers sweet rice, fruits, jaggery, milk, coconut, plantain and such other articles to the Lord, according to his ability. After offering them to the Lord, they are shared between the members of the house or the Bhaktas (devotees) in a temple. From ancient Indian tradition the sharing of food has significance also for the personal relationship between those who partake in the food. To take only the remains of the food, what is left over after the other person has eaten, is a sign of humility, an expression of honour to him who eats first. Hindus believe that the prasad has the deity's blessing residing within it. In

contemporary Hindu religious practice in India, the desire to get prasada and have darshan are the two major motivations of pilgrimage and temple visits.

Prasada is that which gives peace. Water, flowers, rice, etc., are offered to the Lord in worship. When a sacrifice is performed, the participants share the Prasada which bestows the blessings of the gods. Prasad is extremely sacred. There is no restriction of any kind in taking prasad.

Tukaram, the great mystic and poet of Maharashtra in the 17th century, makes abundant use of food and meal to express divine experience in his sacred poetries (abhangas). Tukaram sees in the meal not only the symbol of communion with God but also the bond of mutual spiritual fellowship. Devotees are drawn together by the common gift which they receive from God. Their devotion becomes a source of social solidarity and integration (Neuner, 1987: xvi).

10. Conclusion

Human life is a pilgrimage to one's eternal destiny. One cannot proceed on this pilgrimage without the food required day by day on this journey. Cultural and spiritual traditions have developed a language of symbols to express the importance of food in human life. Food and meals have much significance in the social and cultural life of a community. Family, community and village bonding takes place through eating together. Food also plays an important role in the renewal of relationships and reconciliation. Life is a journey, rites and rituals are the means by which a family and society reaffirms its members to face the challenges of life. At the height of all these rites of passage there is a community meal which bonds the members of a community. Similarly, according to the ecological changes in the environment, feast and festivals are organized to meet the tensions arising from these changes. Here too, festive meals play an important role in strengthening group solidarity and community fellow feeling. There is an intimate relationship between food and religious experiences of people in different cultures. In many religions meal is a symbol of communion with God and also the bond of mutual spiritual fellowship. The food offered at religious places become a source of social solidarity and integration.

As a concluding remark it may be said that there is an intimate relationship between food, culture and religion. There is a community dimension in this relationship. The Christian meaning of Christ as eternal food and the salvific nature of the Eucharist are very deep and theological which will be explored in the following papers.

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Guru Granth Sahib pg. 282

V. EUCHARIST IN ARTISTIC PRESENTATIONS: PAST AND PRESENT

- Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

I. It is obvious that the Eucharistic happening found its entry also into different presentations of art through the centuries. This holds for the presentation of the "Last Supper: as well as for other presentations on Eucharist related Biblical happenings like the Wedding Feast in Cana, the multiplication of bread but also other meal related activities in Scripture and especially in the New Testament. The earliest document of an illustration is an ivory carving from Milan from the 5th century but there are still other general meal presentations in the catacombs. One also find such illustrations in book paintings...

From the early days the meal was presented in the East as a half round table whereas in the West he table could have any form. The presentation of the Last Supper, however, was not only on plain paintings or carvings, it is also found on chalices, on the patena or also as decoration at refectories in monasteries. The Old Testament collection of the Manna in the desert as well as the Jewish Passah celebration further serve as interpretations and illustrations.

One can also divide the different illustrations according to the steps of the press: (1) up till the Reformation, the Betrayal of Judas was first an object for the artists, then followed (2) the institution of the Eucharist which became the main presentations of great artists especially in the consequences of the counter-Reformation. Artists like Tizian, Tintorello, Rubens, Tiepolo and others are examples. (3) In a third step, the distribution of the Eucharist is central like the communion of the Apostles.

Illustrations of the whole happening include the washing of the feet, the institution of the Eucharist and the distribution.

All these paintings or illustrations are a communicative expression of the Eucharistic happening. They are to remind the viewer on this central happening in Salvation to edify, to animate and relate.

II. Another artistic expression is found in the different vessels and their form and presentation as they are used in the Eucharistic celebrations like the chalices, patena and similar utensils. Here also the “monstrance” has to be mentioned which contains the consecrated host for preservation but especially adoration. Since the 13th century, the use of the monstrance in Eucharistic processions like in the Feast of Corpus Christi is another example of a communicative dimension of the Eucharist. Eucharistic expression can also be found on the vestments used for the celebrations.

III. The Eucharist itself finds also its artistic expressions from the very early times in symbols referring to the Eucharistic Lord like fish (Christ as fish = ichtys), bread, grapes and vine, also the God Shepherd or the Lam of God. Also the chalice in general is considered a communicative expression of the Eucharist. The chalice appears already very early in the history of art in presentations of the Crucifixion.

Further symbols in the course of the centuries are also the presentation of the Pelican as symbols of the self-giving Christ.

IV. Eucharistic saints and miracles are another field of artistic presentation and a communicative presence of the Eucharistic Lord. Thus, several presentations exist about Eucharistic miracles where the bread becomes the flesh in the hands of the consecrating priest or the wine becomes blood like in the miracle of Lanciano already in the 9th century or the blood miracle of St. Ambrogio, Florenz (1229/ 1230) presented by Mirro a Fiesole.

One of the greatest artistic presentations of the Eucharist in the “Disputa” of Raffaello (Vatican 1509-11) where the Eucharist is in the midst of the great Christian theologians and artists as the center of faith and juxtaposed to the “school of Athens” as the expression of pure humanism!

The Eucharist in the life of the saints is e.g. presented by the paintings of Rubens or the Last Communion of St Francis or the Last Supper of St. Jerome by Domenichino (Vatican).

V. The celebration of the Eucharist is further a motive which is reflected often also in illustrations of the Missal or other liturgical books. The symbolic allegorical presentation of Hans Baldung Grien seems here to be especially expressive: from the fall of Adam and Eve, the sacrifice of the Lord liberating, and celebrated by the priest (vol. 3, s. 251).

In many of the old Missals, there is a special “Canon Image” illustrating the death of the Lord as a Eucharistic happening (Te Igitur).

Beyond the artistic presentations/ communication of the Eucharist, also actions must be considered as communicative expressions like the Corpus Christi processions or the presentation of the consecrated Host at special occasions. The Eucharist as such (e.g. Liturgy) must be considered a communicative happening.

VI. EUCHARIST AND COMMUNICATION: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

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My task is to provide a theological viewpoint to our theme which is “Eucharist as Communication” and I am very happy that this meeting has opted for an inter-disciplinary approach. There were talks about meals in cultures, in art and also in the other faith communities in Asia. After all, the distinctive character of the Asian approach whether in theology, spirituality or pastoral life is dialogue. “Ecclesia in Asia” said that the distinctive mode of the existence of the Church in Asia is that of dialogue and so we don’t approach any aspect of our lives purely from speculation but hopefully in the spirit of dialogue in the sciences, with the arts, and with our tradition.

The Judeo-Christian tradition actually rests on communication. When we talk about revelation, grace, covenant, they are all communicative events. But it is good to be reminded that for us communication always begins with God. We have a God who takes the initiative in communicating. Our God talks; our God discloses the Divine plan. Our God discloses Himself so the communication that we are talking about in the context of the Christian faith is first and foremost, an action of God. God starts communicating Himself and His Divine Will to save us. That is how *Dei Verbum* describes Divine communication.

And our response in faith completes the communication event. So for us in Asia, we are justified in calling this relationship with God as the communication of dialogue initiated by God and hopefully, completed by us through our faith response. And in the Judeo-Christian tradition, there is fear of the loss of communication with God. There is fear in being poor in losing food, in losing food, in losing our loved ones. But there is the ultimate fear of losing touch with God. That’s why we fear death.

Death is not just the end of physical life. In Scriptures, death is the end of communication with God. It is the place of silence. Silence, not just in terms of tranquility around us, but silence meaning the end of communication. So for the Bible, life is communication with God and death is the loss of communication with God. And so we may be physically alive but dead if we are not in communication with God. And we may be physically dead but alive when communion continues.

This is the beauty of the Judeo-Christian understanding of communication. The silence of death does not have the last word. The last word is the victory of life in Jesus Christ. The Paschal Mystery turns the table around. What used to be the end of communication became the apex of communication: eternal life in death, and eternal life after death. So those who try to put Jesus to death thought by silencing Jesus the communication between God and humanity would stop in Jesus. But no! In the resurrection of Jesus, the communication resumes and becomes eternal. This is what we celebrate in the Eucharist.

The memorial of the Paschal Mystery puts us into this eternal communication between God and humanity that cannot be silenced even by death. But when we remember the Supper before he died, we need to link it up with the Cross. Pope Benedict XVI is very strong in this. The Supper makes sense only in relationship to Calvary. Without the connection between the Supper and Calvary, then it is just one of the many suppers that Jesus had. And Jesus ate a lot. He frequented houses and tables and had a lot of meals. But what is distinctive about this Last Meal is that it is a prophetic pre-figuration of the Cross. The meal, the taking of the bread, the taking of chalice with wine, the washing of the feet makes sense only in connection with what will happen at Calvary. So the Supper sheds light on the Cross, and the Cross sheds light on the meaning of the Supper.

But the Cross as we said, is not the last word. The silence of death on the Cross led to the resounding word of life in the resurrection. So the Cross cannot be understood also apart from the resumed communication of life and love in the resurrection. Without the resurrection, the death on the Cross is just one of the many, many crucifixions during that time. But without the Cross, the resurrection also loses its significance. The silence of death on the Cross was just a way by which God will shout to us the eternal message of Love.

This is the grace that we renew everyday in the Eucharist. Every time we gather for the Eucharist, the communication between God and humanity in Jesus continues. This is the grace that we constantly touch in the Eucharist. No wonder, Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* 10 considers the Eucharist as the source and the apex of Christian life. For we draw the meaning of Christian life, and we draw the meaning of our being Church – our identity as the body of Christ – from our faith expressed in the Eucharist. Our faith that God has communicated with us; our faith that God will refuse to stop communicating with us. Our faith in a God that will defy the silence of death and will continue communicating to us by giving His Son, body and blood, and in service to us.

The Eucharist is a testament to our God who will not be silenced and a God who will say “no matter what you do to cut my communication with you, I refuse!” “I refuse!” “I will keep communicating with you the love and life that I want to share with you in Jesus Christ.”

With that as our main framework, I would now go to a few details regarding the Eucharist set in the context of this communicative event centered on the Paschal Mystery of Jesus, giving us life and identity as Church. Here we can go also to Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical “*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*,” the connecting between the Eucharist and the Church’s identity and mission. We will also go to the latest Pontifical document, the Apostolic Exhortation “*Sacramentum Caritatis*” also on the Eucharist. But for our purposes, I would approach our theme from a more liturgical, experiential approach rather than speculative. We have enough documents that will lead us to that more contemplative and speculative approach to the Eucharist as Communication. What I will try to do is to identify the different movements or rhythms or moments in the actual celebration of the Eucharist as we have it now, the Pope Paul VI’s Mass – not the Tridentine Mass. But it is the same movement if you want to take it. *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*.

Let us look at how the worship in the Eucharist flows and from there we will see. We do it everyday and our people engage in it but when we look at it closely, then we understand the Eucharist as communication initiated by God drawing from us a response of faith centered on the Paschal Mystery giving us the conviction not to stop our communication of God. And that is the identity of the Church as a community of life and love.

A. Movements of Liturgy

I beg the indulgence of the liturgists. I am not a liturgist but I will dare to interpret some parts of the Eucharistic liturgy as moments of communication. To simplify matters, I have here four short points pointing to four movements of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The **first moment** in the Eucharist is the “gathering moment.” Here, three short points: The Lord calls, invites, and communicates to us an appeal to come together for the Eucharist. The Eucharist begins with that call of the Lord. That’s why it is called the “Lord’s Supper.” It is the Lord who invites; it is the Lord who hosts the supper. And so the Eucharist as an event begins with an initiative of God calling us out of our homes, out of our busy schedule to be together to celebrate the Pasch of the Lord.

And so it is fitting that the Rite of the Eucharist begins with an acknowledgment that the gathering happens in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And not in the name of Father so and so, not in the name of Monsignor so and so. That’s why people who call the office and say, “what is the time of Father’s mass?” They want to know the schedule of their favorite priest. “What time is the Mass of Monsignor so and so?” I don’t give the hours. It is the Lord who invites and who gathers us and not Monsignor. If you are being gathered by Monsignor, that is not Eucharist. Maybe it is some social function. Maybe it is some “fans’ club” the fanatics of Monsignor so and so who come to worship and are so fascinated by his style and forget the Lord. If it is Monsignor who hosts the supper, then let him bring you to a restaurant. But it is the Lord’s Supper, and I think we should recover this element of the Eucharistic mystery: that the gathering from the very beginning is initiated by the Lord who communicates an appeal, an invitation to His Supper. That is significant for me.

This leads us to the **second reflection** regarding the gathering moment. Because it is the Lord who gathers and invites, whom does He invite? He invites everyone, people who come from different educational backgrounds, different strata of society, different ethnic groups, different age groups, etc. The community that is gathered and invited by the Lord is supposed to be the beginnings of a new family of God’s children who may be divided by the world because of economic, political, social, cultural roots and backgrounds. But because it is the Lord who gathers, and because of the common response in grace, they become brothers and sisters under the One Parenthood, Fatherhood of God. This is Ecclesia. This is church.

This is the fruit of God’s communication and let us marvel at the fruit of God’s communication. The fruit is a community of presence, people who otherwise would not be present to one another. If I celebrate my birthday with a party, I would normally invite my relatives, my close collaborators and friends, and those who work, think, and smell like me. I will be choosy. And because I choose, many people will not be part of my supper. But because it is the Lord who calls, then oh! a mixed group is there. And they start communicating with each other in the very act of coming together. This is a communication of presence. We are present to one another as brothers and sisters and only the grace of God who hosts the Supper can make us communicate that way to one another: The silent communication of the presence of a brother or a sister.

It is surprising that in the Eucharist you find people obviously dressed, rich people seated beside people who are poor and simple. You find old and young gathered, educated and non-educated gathered seated side by side, communicating a presence to one another which is the presence of a brother or a sister, both of us responding to God’s grace and only the Eucharist as the Lord’s Supper can make that communication happen. When it comes to other affairs, some stores are for the rich, some stores are for the poor. Some restaurants are for the rich, some

restaurants are for the poor. But when it comes to the Eucharist, with the invitation of the Lord, we start communicating a presence to one another, the presence of a neighbor, the presence of a brother, the presence of a sister.

This is the foretaste of a new humanity, the new Jerusalem that we are all longing for. But you see, in the Eucharist we are capable of communicating a brotherly and sisterly presence to one another because we are all responding to a call beyond us. The Eucharist teaches us that if we are able to go beyond our petty concerns. If we recognize a calling beyond us, then maybe we can communicate with one another a neighborly, brotherly, sisterly presence. But the moment we forget or we don't hear the call of someone greater than us, and we just hear our own personal callings to our own agenda and our own purposes, then we also don't communicate a loving presence to one another.

By the way, at this point I lament the fact that even in families the gathering, the communication of presence to one another right there in the families is getting weak. That's why we cannot even talk to people now about meals because they don't have experiences of meals – meals as gatherings. We are getting used to fast foods. There was a time when the basic unit of a meal was the table, the common table around which the family gathered. But now the basic unit of a meal is not the table but the plate. Once you have your plate, you can go anywhere and eat. That's very individualistic now. The buffet table is an image of that. I am very sorry. We are eating buffet style here. Instead of every table having the food there at the center and we are gathering around the food, look at what we do: we line up and get our share and go wherever we want to go. We may even go up to our room if it is forbidden to eat in the rooms.

But this is not Eucharist. The Eucharist is gathering around the table, not around my plate. Fast food. Food courts in the shopping areas and as indicated already yesterday, we have television sets in every room so members of the family, they get their plates and eat while watching TV and they don't "gather" anymore. When I was growing up, it was embarrassing to come home late for a meal. Because they don't start, they did not start eating without all of us there around the table. So whatever you are doing, wherever you are you are supposed to be attentive to the time like "hey, the whole family because they will not eat without me." Now it is different. I hear parents say, "oh! eat whenever you want." Mothers now say in the Philippines, "I don't hold the cooking pot. The pot is there. Go whenever you want to eat."

But you are missing this communication of presence where there is someone calling us and because we are all responding to the same call, we start communicating with one another quietly through the presence of a loved one, a brother or a sister, and the church is born. Ecclesia.

So the church is born as a response to God's invitation as truly the body of Christ, truly as a community of equals, loved by God. But that leads us to a **third reflection** on this moment: As we rejoice as all being children of God, we also recognize at the beginning of this gathering that we are all sinners. Yes, we are all God's children. But there we also say, "I confess to Almighty God..." "Lord, have mercy." From the Pope who celebrates Mass to the lowly parishioner, all of us, will say, "Yes, we are God's children. But we are all sinners." And so we communicate to God an appeal for forgiveness and we communicate to each other an appeal for prayer. "And I ask you brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord, our God." What is happening here? No one pretends to be holier than the other. The community that is gathered is the community of the children of God but also a community of beggars. Before God and before each other, we are beggars. We are all poor. All of us are in need of God's mercy. We are all in need also of mutual support. How I wish, this is the type of communication that will happen to

the world. The wars, the battles, the violence that we see around us, the discrimination – they are all signs of the break down of communication among people who are pretending to be powerful. If all of us could just communicate to God and to one another the way we do it in the Eucharist, the gathering moment as beggars, all of us poor yet loved by God, I think there will be no war. I think Bush will tell Sadam, “pray for me to the Lord, our God.” Or Sadam, of happy memory, will say “Hey George, I am also a sinner like you. Pray for me to the Lord, our God.”

But that is not the way of communication in the world. Everyone pretends to be holier than the other. Everyone pretends to be the guardian of goodness and others as the source of evil. And that is the breakdown of communion. But the Eucharist teaches us a radical way of communicating to God and to one another. We are all loved, invited by the Lord. But we are all sinners in need of mercy. And so we will not fight each other. We will not be discriminatory towards each other, because we are all in need of help and mercy.

That gathering moment, that first part of the Eucharist, is already filled with deep truths about the way communication happens and is experienced in the Eucharist. The Eucharist begins with a communication of grace, communication of call, that generates a response of faith and this response of faith is seen in a communion, a community of brothers and sisters communicating to one another a presence of love and also a humble presence that makes all of us appeal to God for mercy and forgiveness.

I think this is the reason why in 1Corinthians 11:17-26, St Paul could not praise the Corinthians who were divided: “I am for Apollos,” “I am for Cephas,” “I am for Paul.” And they brought their division to the Lord’s Supper. And so they were eating without any regard for each other. And so St Paul asks: “Don’t you have homes where you can eat? Or are you insulting the church of God?” The first part of the Eucharistic celebration teaches us a form of communication that begins with God and should generate an equal communication on our part responding to God and responding to our brothers and sisters in humility and in brotherly/sisterly love. So this is the first part of the Mass, from the beginning up to the Opening Prayer, what we call the “gathering moment.”

B. Storytelling

So after we have gathered, what do we do? Normally in life, we see each other and say: “hey, how are you?” When two or three are gathered, story telling begins and that is the second communicating moment of the Eucharist, what I will call the “storytelling moment.” Or what liturgists would call, the “Liturgy of the Word.” From being gathered by the communication of God, and we are taught how to communicate to one another as brothers and sisters, and are also appealing for God’s mercy, now we go to second moment. The community that is gathered will now keep memory, “memorial,” through story telling.

Last year, we had the Asian Mission Congress in Chiang Mai and it dwelt on the theme “Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia” as the mode of mission. Maybe we can review that a bit. But let me just focus on the Liturgy of the Word as a storytelling moment at the service of the Eucharist as a memorial. And here, two short reflections:

In the storytelling moment of the communicative event called the Eucharist, the story of God’s in salvation history is recounted through the readings of the Old Testament, the New Testament and especially the Gospel, centered on Jesus. So the story of God’s action in salvation history is recounted. For what? One youth leader approached me and asked, “Bishop,

why do we keep on proclaiming the same readings?” Why don’t we choose other readings for variety?” I asked, “What do you mean?” “Well, I already know the story and then we keep hearing the same stories, the same Gospels.” And so I said, “Look, there is a purpose to that constant proclamation of the story. It is not just to tell the story once. It is to keep the story alive so that we communicate not only data or information. But we transmit, we communicate a memory.”

And there is a difference between sharing information and passing on a memory. I continue teaching and I notice that many students do not remember the things you teach. And this ruins your self-esteem as a teacher. And the end of the exam, questions come like: “Did I do anything good last semester? How come that they still don’t know anything?” But then I realize there is a difference between memorizing and real memorial. When a person is in love, you don’t need to memorize. You will always remember. And I think this is the purpose of this constant story telling so that we can keep the memory alive because every time the story is told, we are invited to love – to respond in love to the God who has first loved us, and whose mighty deeds in salvation history are recounted over and over again. And by remembering these things, we are one with the previous communities who remembered these things – who remembered the same things, and by remembering the same mighty deeds of God, we are already in union with the future generations of Christians who hopefully will remember the same things. “Communication of memory.”

As we communicate memory, we constitute community also. For what is a community? One sociologist’s response to the question, “How do you know that you belong to a particular community?” is “when you remember what the other members remember.” I think that the purpose of novitiates among the religious. In the novitiate period, you are initiated into the common memory of your congregation, so that an SVD in the year 2007 can say, “yes, I was there when St Arnold Janssen started the movement... I was there.” That novice is now part of the corporate memory. A Salesian could say, “yes, I was there when St John Bosco was having his inspiration... I was there.” This corporate memory really makes us one community.

Imagine: how can you have a family, when the husband and the wife don’t remember the same things? They don’t even remember their wedding anniversary. They ask “hey, do you remember this?” “No, I don’t remember that.” That’s the sign that they belong to different communities: when they don’t share common memory. Well, maybe because they don’t tell stories to one another anymore and that is the sad thing. When our families don’t gather to eat together, they don’t also gather to share their stories and then they don’t have common memory. Each one has his or her personal memory but not put into the reserve, the reservoir of common memory that will make them a community. And so, this part of the Eucharist – this story telling portion – nurtures common memory, communicates the memory of the past communities so that we in turn could pass on that memory to the next community. And so, we should not get tired listening to the proclamation of the Word and then responding to it. That will make us really part of the Christian community.

But there is a second reflection that I want to insert here. The story of God’s action in salvation history comes in the form of human stories. And so, we are told: “The first reading is taken from the book of Daniel..” But after the readings, the lector says: “The Word of the Lord.” Why not say “.. the word of Daniel?” We begin by saying: “The first reading is from the Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians..” And then we end by saying: “The Word of the Lord..” and “Thanks be to God.” Why not “The word of Paul. Thanks Paul.” There is a mystery of communication here. God communicates His word through human stories, through very simple

human instruments and their stories in life. Now, this teaches us to listen constantly to God's communication through the stories of other people, especially in our times where simple but threatening human stories are being suppressed: in Myanmar, in Cambodia, in the Philippines, in Indonesia. Some stories, very simple human stories are being suppressed. Why? Because the world is afraid to hear God's communication.

When we are afraid to hear what God wants to communicate, then we suppress some of those threatening human stories. But the Eucharist teaches us to welcome God's communication through the instrumentation of simple human stories. And hopefully, that will become our lifestyle as we listen to each other's stories, for example, during lunch. Those of you who will tell stories to one another, after listening, before you stand up try to say: "The Word of the Lord. Thanks by to God. From your story, I heard God's story."

Before coming here, I was already at the airport, I received a message from a woman whose daughter was raped. A part of me just wanted to refuse to listen to the story. I could make an excuse and say: "Look, I am waiting for my flight. Can your story wait?" But imagine a mother discovering that her daughter, raped. That is not a good story to tell. It is a nightmare. But I am sure this woman who is very close to the church is beginning to ask herself: "what is God's story here?" "Where is God's story in this horrible nightmare?" And when I called her up, there were no words. Just screams and cries. But how many in the world are like her?

And the Eucharist teaches us, can you welcome these stories into your common memory? Can the Christian community be a community of memory such that the story of Daniel, the story of Abraham, the story of Sarah, the story of Mary and Joseph, the story of the humiliation of Peter, and now the story of so many poor people, could be part of our common memory and from there we undergo this painful and difficult communicative moment of discernment to see where God's story is unfolding before us through these human stories.

The Liturgy of the Word, a story telling moment, becoming a community of memory teaches us a lifestyle of listening, discerning leading to communion, where our stories intersect in our common search for God. So the second moment of the Eucharistic communicative event called the "story telling moment" is a communication on the part of God, of God's memory entrusted to the Church to be our common memory leading us to become better listeners not only of the Word of God in Scriptures but the Word of God in human stories and making us a discerning church being able to relate people's stories to the story of God.

C. Nurturing and Sharing

Normally, after a gathering we tell stories and in good Asian custom after telling stories, we say: "Hey, why don't you take something? You want some cookies, you want some coffee or tea?" So you gather, and after gathering you start telling your stories and then you eat. And that flows also into the Eucharistic experience. After the story telling moment, comes the "nurturing and sharing" moment; the nurturing and sharing moment, which in the traditional Eucharistic theology is what I would call the "sacrificial meal" – the meal that is sacrifice.

Here, I would like to highlight two points: The first is the gifts that come to us – bread and wine – and sometimes people give other gifts. They give fruits and vegetables. I had a feast of one parish. It was a small and poor parish in our diocese and the offering is very simple. One woman brought a live chicken. She said: "Bishop this is for you." I said: "Can I kill this and eat this or what? Or should I use this for gambling?" People offer what they have and sometimes they give some money also for the charitable work of the Church.

But the bread and wine, staple food. However, somewhere in the offering of the gifts is something quite unfortunate. Because of the Offertory song, the beautiful prayers said over the bread and wine are seldom heard by the people. But I think they capture another important element of the communication in the Eucharist. Taking the bread, the priest or presider says: “Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the Bread of Life.” The same with the wine, thanking the Lord for His goodness, the priest then says: “...fruit of the vine and work of human hands.” Now, that’s communication. The bread and wine are the signs of the communication of God, the creator. “Through your goodness, we have this bread and wine to offer..”

God communicates love concretely, nurturing us, through bread and wine. But it is not only God, the creator, who communicates through bread and wine. The earth communicates to us as well. The earth communicates to us its caring for us through the bread and wine. And the laborers, the poor laborers; they are communicating to us the fruits of their sweat and blood. Through those simple bread and wine love is communicated to us: the love of the Creator, the love of the earth, the love of simple workers who are often discriminated against and unjustly treated. These are simple gifts. In fact, the type of Mass wine that we have is not the type of wine that you will serve when you have respectable guests for dinner. You will be too embarrassed to make them drink over steak, Mass wine. The wine that we use, the bread that we use at Eucharist are very simple but profound communication of the confluence of providence from God and from the action, the continuing sustenance of human life by the earth and by hidden, unknown human hands.

So at this moment of the Liturgy, a form of communication which is very much against or contrary to our consumerist, materialistic lifestyle is being communicated to us. We are being told that the world, that reality, is “gift” – gift of God, gift of creation, gift of human hands. You dear brothers and sisters, we are losing the sense of “gift.” Creation is becoming an object rather than gift. The many parts of creation are not seen anymore as “wow..” I remember when I was a young boy, we would go to excursions like to the waterfalls. I remember when I was in grade school, we took this small boat shooting the rapids and there were some portions along the river that you suddenly you burst out “Lord, you are alive! You are here, in the beauty of creation.” You just know that you are before God’s gift, you are before the Provident Creator communicating love, life, and giftedness. But nowadays no more, when you see something beautiful, some people ask: “What can we do this? Maybe we can make a profit out of this. Maybe we can make this a tourist attraction. Maybe we can cut these trees and make them souvenirs.” They are not anymore gifts that will elicit adoration, respect, awe and wonder. Everything becomes an object to be manipulated and to be taken advantage of.

The Eucharist is teaching us again to respond in communication with creation, with simple gifts, with respect and awe, and wonder. Our mode of communication with creation in our consumerist world is one of manipulation. This portion of the Eucharist teaches us to try another way of communicating with bread and wine and the goods of the earth, to communicate with awe, wonder, respect and even adoration of God.

A second reflection on this nurturing and sharing moment: God, the Creator, nurtures us, human hands nurture us. This is a communication of love in the bread and wine. But the prayer continues by saying: “... This will become for us the Bread of Life.” “This will become for us the Cup of Salvation.” The simple bread and wine will become the supreme communication of love and life in Jesus, the Bread of Life, the Saviour of the world. And it leads us to the

remembrance of the Last Supper where the bread and wine became His body and blood for the life of the world.

Here, we are at the heart of the meal which is sacrifice – the self-donation of Jesus. What distinguishes this meal is the fact that Jesus is giving Himself, giving Himself as food, giving Himself as drink. It is not just any other good but the gift of life so that others may live. So here we find the height of communication beyond words. In Jesus, the true Bread of Life, communication is sharing of life – of Himself – for the nurturance of the world. And we hope that through this nurturing and sharing moment of the Eucharist, we will all learn how to communicate by giving of our lives to others. It is easy to give gifts. It is easy to buy items to be given but the supreme communication that we learn from Jesus is to give oneself. The gift we have received, we should give as a gift to others.

This is what the washing of the feet in John 14 talks about. This is what Luke 22:14-27, the Last Supper, talks about. After the meal, Jesus would always go to the meaning of the meal as giving of oneself – the supreme communication. So in this portion of the Eucharist, we find this wonderful exchange: God nurturing us with life through bread and wine, so that we could share that life to others. God communicates life and love so that we like Jesus could communicate life and love to others. We are going a little deeper here: from communication of presence, communication of memory, and towards the communication of the very self. Here, you communicate your very self, communicate your life.

And finally, normally after gathering and telling a bit of stories and eating, we tell ourselves: “Hey, it is late. We better go home. See you again.” We will break the physical presence for a while, we will return to our daily homes, in view of seeing each other again. In the Eucharist, this last moment is what we call the “missioning” moment. *Ita Missa est.* It is not just a dismissal but it is a “sending,” a sending. This is a beautiful twist in the development of liturgical theology where a simple dismissal “Go home, the Mass is ended” has become a “missionary moment.”

But again here, we started with a call, a communication that is a call. But we end the Eucharist with another communication: “you go.” This is the paradox of God’s calling. On the one hand, God communicates an invitation: “Come to me.” But beware, when you come to Him, one day he will also say: “Go!” This paradox of God’s communication experienced right there at the Eucharist: “Come to me” (gathering) but it will end with “Go!”

But how do we go? What is the sending here? I think the Spirit of the sending here is in 1John 1:1-4, the first letter of John, where the apostle John says: “What we have heard with our ears, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have touched with our hands regarding the Word of Life, we in turn proclaim to you.” I think this is the Spirit of this last portion of the Eucharist. During the Eucharist, we have gathered and touched the presence of God in the community. In the Eucharist, we have heard the memory and hopefully we have made it our own. In the Eucharist, we have tasted the love of God in the body and blood of Jesus. What we have seen, we have heard, we have tasted, now communicate that. Communicate that to others. Share it with others and the next time God calls to be gathered, bring to the table, bring to the gathering the many stories also of other people whom you have touched. The mission here is a communication of what we have received in the Eucharistic communication.

But then the cycle continues. The next time we will gather again, tell stories, we will share and nurture each other and then we go; all of this as a response to God’s communication. I think it is a good summary of what the Eucharist is. We can truly interpret the Eucharist following the liturgical flow – every moment is a never ending communication, always initiated

by God in different forms: calling to gather, telling the story, sharing bread and wine, and then sending forth. All are initiated by God. Different levels of communication require different levels of response to and from us: to gather with brothers and sisters, with fellow sinners, to gather by being listening presences to other people gathering to be also sharing, to share our lives to others, as a supreme act of communication and then going, going to be bearers of the Good News.

This is what the Eucharist is all about. But this is also what the Church is all about. The Church as a gathered community in God's love, a bearer of memory, a sharing and nurturing presence in the world, and missionary community in the world. All of this is born out of the communication of God, of love and life especially in Jesus – a God who will not be stopped from communicating to us. In fact, God transformed the silence of the death of Christ into a resounding and eternal communication of His love and life.

So we are made by the Eucharist and we hope we can make the Eucharist truly happen through our constant communication of the Paschal mystery in our lives.

VII. LITURGY AS A COMMUNICATIVE HAPPENING - *Amelito Racelis, sdb*

1. Christ and the Church as the Foundation

When we talk about liturgy as a communicative process, we cannot but talk about Jesus first, as the Medium that perfectly restored the communication between God and humankind, as well as the Church as the Medium of Christ.

1.1 Christ as the Medium of God's Self-Communication with Humankind.

Our faith tells us that God's self-communication took place in an ultimate and unique fashion through Jesus Christ, his Son our Lord. It is ultimate because God, in the Old Testament, has already been communicating with his people in various ways, through creation, through events (like the exodus or the Babylonian exile), and through people (like the prophets, the priests, the judges and the kings). Then finally at the appointed time he sent his Son, the image of the invisible God, at the same time, first born of all creatures. It is also unique because no one else was able to re-establish that connection so perfectly between fallen humanity and the Almighty God, Creator of all, except Jesus Christ. It was through Jesus that reconciliation, or to use a more familiar word, re-connection took place between God and humankind, and above all, brought about a union between them.

During his life and ministry Jesus communicated with his Father in heaven through both verbal and non-verbal language. He read and meditated on the Scriptures. He prayed the Psalms and other Jewish prayers. He knelt down, prostrated himself, raised his hands, looked up to heaven, fasted for forty days and forty nights, made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and offered sacrifices. And he offered his very life on the cross. Through his words and deeds, be they ritual or non-ritual, Jesus was in constant communication and intimate communion with his Father. It was in fact in Gethsemane and on Calvary that this union reached its apex, that is, when he submitted himself to the will of his Father even to death on a cross for the salvation of the whole world.

With the people of his time, Jesus communicated also by means of both verbal and non-verbal language, that is, by his words and his deeds. He used words to tell them the good news about God's mercy and love. And many times he supported his words with corresponding deeds. For instance, when he said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" he proved such power to forgive by curing him before everyone's eyes, saying "stand up, pick up your mat and go home." In this example, Jesus used deeds to prove the power of his words. In another instance, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish and after the blessing, gave them to his apostles to feed the five thousand. Shortly after that, he explained the great miracle, saying "I am the bread of life" so that his disciples will work not for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts to eternal life. In this case, Jesus used words to explain the true meaning of his deeds. These two examples show that during Jesus' public ministry, his powerful words were in harmony with his wondrous deeds. And we can push the discussion even further. We can assert that there was perfect harmony between the person of the messenger Jesus, and the message he was sent to communicate. Moreover, there was perfect harmony between Jesus, both medium and mediator, and the Father who sent him. There was perfect harmony between Jesus and the disciples who received and accepted his message. Thus, in Jesus we see the various elements of communication in perfect harmony: sender, receiver, message, medium, context, and feedback. And this could explain very well why he had great impact. And that which made the greatest impact of all was his passion, death and resurrection. It is important to note at this point that the Vatican II, before discussing the nature of liturgy in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), presents first the significance of the Paschal mystery of Christ in the economy of salvation (cf. SC 5).

1.2 The Church as the Medium of Christ

When Jesus ascended into heaven, the lines of communication that he restored between God and humankind were not cut-off a second time. They were rather sustained and continued by the Church, whom he united with himself so perfectly that she could in turn be the medium of communication between God and the whole world (cf. SC 7).

Imbued by the same Spirit of Christ, the Apostles preached the same good news that Jesus proclaimed. And they also carried out the same works that Jesus did: curing the sick, making the lame walk, and the blind see, restoring the dead to life, forgiving sins and making the people experience the saving presence of God and the transforming power of the risen Lord. And so while Christ can be called "the sacrament of the encounter with God," the Church can in turn be called the sacrament of the encounter with Christ. She communicates Christ to the world and communicates with the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit on behalf of the world, until all are one in God and God is in all. Hence, through her preaching and works of charity she makes Christ present in the world even today.

Above all, the Church continues to make Christ present today in and through the liturgy, strongly convinced that where two or three are gathered in the Lord's name He is there in their midst. The Greek word that captures the full meaning of this reality is *anamnesis*, the act of remembering the past so powerfully that the past is made present in the here and now (cf. SC 6).

2. Liturgy as the Church's Powerful Medium of Communication

In the liturgy, the Church communicates through both ritual words (Scripture readings and prayers) and ritual actions (ritual gestures, postures, signs and symbols), through both verbal and non-verbal languages. Vatican II defined liturgy as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ in which both the public worship of God as well as the sanctification of man are accomplished through signs perceptible by the senses (cf. SC 7). Hence, a priest or a deacon baptizes an infant by pouring water on his head or immersing him into the water, simultaneously saying “I baptize you in the name of the Father...” Both the ritual bath and the formula together form a single sign that can communicate God’s gift of divine life. During the Mass the Eucharistic bread and wine are offered to God while the Eucharistic prayer is being recited by the presiding priest. Both the act of offering and the Eucharistic prayer together have the power to transform the gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ and enable the recipients to be in communion with the Lord and with one another. In Confession the priest does not only say to the penitent “I absolve you from your sins...” but also lays his hands on the head of the person and makes the sign of the cross over him. Both the act of imposition and the words of absolution together can bring about forgiveness and reconciliation. To bless a person, vehicle or a house, an ordained minister first says the prayer of blessing before sprinkling holy water on them. Both the blessing prayer and action of sprinkling holy water have the power to sanctify persons, places or things so as to bring about an encounter with the divine. In these recent times, it is even demanded that a liturgy of the word should precede any ritual action. Hence, all these affirm that Liturgy, in as much as it uses significant words and symbolic actions to make Christ and his saving power present, is indeed a communicative process.

We must know, however, that the communicative power of the liturgy depends not only on the words and actions used during the rite but on the entire celebration as well, which includes the architectural and interior design of the building, the general floor plan, the gathering space, the vessels and vestments used, the display of sacred images and statues, the bodily postures, gestures and movements, the songs and music, the lights and the sounds, and the use of other sacred signs and symbols, and most important of all, the ministers involved and the whole assembly. Each of these elements can truly make liturgy a grace-filled encounter with Christ and his Church if each stands in harmony with all the other elements. (We have to keep in mind that the full, conscious and active participation of the faithful is the principle that should guide any liturgical celebration.) And only when there is harmony in the celebration can we say that the whole liturgy is truly a communicative happening. Allow me just to present to you in the next few minutes my own experience and realizations of the communicative power of the Liturgy.

2.1 The Architecture and Interior Design

The purpose of sacred architecture is to offer the Church a fitting space for the celebration of the mysteries of faith, especially the Eucharist (cf. Proposition 27, quoted by Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 41).

In Rome one of the many Churches that made a really big impression on me is the Parish Church of St. John Bosco in Cinecittà. From the outside, the church at first seemed to be just like any other 20th century church built in Rome. But inside it was different. When I was entering the door the first thing that caught my attention was the big dome which provided a natural lighting for the sanctuary of the church. And as I was looking at it from where I stood, I felt some kind of magnetic energy drawing me towards the altar to pray. And so I allowed myself to be drawn and slowly knelt down in front. It was the first time in my life that I felt my prayers were being sucked upward into heaven.

Many years later, when I visited some old churches built hundreds of years ago in my own country, like the church of St. Michael in Bulacan, I remembered the churches I have seen in Rome, churches with big and huge domes, and realized such artistic design was made not just for aesthetics, but rather for a particularly theological meaning. In this case it highlights the eschatological dimension of the Church and her liturgical celebrations. General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) emphasizes this today when it states that the church should be worthy and should be a sign reflecting heavenly realities (cf. GIRM 288).

Much ahead of this type of churches, the gigantic Gothic churches of the middle ages, towering high above all other buildings, already expressed this reality. The vertical lines pointing upward lead to one's personal relationship with God nurtured in the liturgy. The stained glass that softens the sunlight as it penetrates the windows gives the celebration a sense of sacredness and mystery, for indeed the liturgy is a celebration of the mystery of Christ and the mysteries of our faith.

Many centuries later the baroque art added to the liturgy a festive mood and atmosphere and helped the people to somehow be detached from this world and be in communion with the saints whose images are painted on the church walls and the ceiling. All these illustrate in a vividly artistic way what Vatican II will later teach, that the earthly liturgy is a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy (cf. SC 8). Indeed, church architecture and interior design empower the liturgy to have a much greater impact on those participating in it.

2.2 The General Floor Plan

Before Vatican II almost all churches followed the cruciform plan. "The top end of the cross housed the sanctuary. The arms contained shrines and altars, and the bottom or long end of the cross contained pews or chairs for the people... The members of the assembly watched the action in the sanctuary, the top of the cross, where the minister, representing Christ the head of the Church, enacted the liturgy for the people"² There was no ambo because scripture reading was seen only as a preparation for the sacrifice of the Mass. The chair of the priest was at one side of the sanctuary which indicates that it was not that important. The main altar was standing against the wall so that when the priest offers the sacrifice only his back would be visible to the people. Obviously participation of the people here is at the minimum, because the liturgy was understood to be the work of the priest alone on behalf of the people.

After Vatican II, a different floor was introduced. New churches were built in either hexagonal form, octagonal, semi-circular, circular or elliptical form. The best of all these according to Mark Boyer is circular or elliptical in form because these two could elicit maximum participation from the people. People are arranged all around the center of action; they are all in full view of each other and can interact with each other.³ This form can also be called the stadium model or the living room model. Take note that

² Mark Boyer, *The Liturgical Environment. What the Documents Say*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004, p.8

³ Cf. Mark Boyer 9.

many papal Masses in these recent years have been celebrated in stadiums. This new floor plan reflects a new theology of the Church as the people of God, the mystical Body of Christ.

A beautiful example of this model which I can present to you in a smaller scale is the chapel I have seen back in my own country, particularly in Greenbelt, Makati City. It is circular in shape. At the very center is the altar with a prominent cross standing close to it. The base supporting the altar is the tabernacle itself. There are no walls in this chapel; only the ceiling above and four or five small rooms (sacristy, offices, and reconciliation rooms) on which the ceiling rests. All pews are arranged around the altar. Mounted on the ceiling above the altar is the image of Jesus Christ, surrounded by lights giving it a semblance of a U.F.O. (= unidentified flying object) from outer space.

At this point let me emphasize two primary requirements which ensure the full, conscious and active participation of the whole assembly: visibility and audibility. Visibility means that all the faithful should be able to see the ministers at the altar, the ambo and the chair, and similarly, all the ministers at the altar should be able to see all the faithful. It also means that the members of the assembly should be able to see each other. Audibility means that ministers should be heard from the altar, the ambo, the chair, and the font. Other ministers like the cantors, the song leaders and musicians should also be heard from their places. Microphones can foster audibility but they should be arranged discreetly on the altar (cf. GIRM 306, 311). If the principles of visibility and audibility are strictly followed in the construction or renovation of our churches, then our people will be able to participate better in our liturgies and consequently commune with God.

2.3 The Gathering Space

One more characteristic feature of old churches which in the construction of new churches are often overlooked today is the gathering space. This is a place spacious enough for the assembly to gather before or after any celebration. It is the place where people welcome and greet each other, engage in conversation, and form processions. It is also the place where certain rites are celebrated, as for instance, the Rite of Becoming a Catechumen, the welcoming of parents and godparents of a child to be baptized (see the Rite of Baptism for Children), and the reception of the body or ashes for a funeral (see Order of Christian Funerals). Old churches and basilicas used to have this gathering space, as for instance, St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, the Basilica of St. Paul outside the walls in Rome.

Some years ago I visited a parish church in Taipei which had an ample space not only in front of the entrance door, but also at the side of the church. This one at the side was even more spacious and it looked like a mini amphitheater good enough to contain people for the service of the light on Easter vigil.

We can say therefore that the architecture, the interior design, the floor plan, the gathering space can contribute a lot to make our liturgical celebrations more welcoming, more engaging, and more communicative so that the people as a result may become more participative in the mystery being celebrated.

2.4 The Altar-table and the Cross

The altar and the cross are among the primary symbols that should be central and prominent at the church sanctuary. The altar is Christ in as much as he is the priest, the victim and the altar of sacrifice at the same time. The cross with the corpus of Christ should be either on the altar or near it in order to show the connection between the sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharistic sacrifice being offered on the altar (cf. GIRM 308). The GIRM emphasizes that there should be only one altar in every church and that it should be built apart from the wall, whether it is fixed on the ground or movable. Furthermore, the U.S. bishops document on art, architecture and worship recommends that its size and the shape should be in proportion to the space it will occupy and in harmony with other furnishings (*Built of Living Stones*, 58).

From the beginning of the Mass until the proclamation of the Gospel, *the Book of the Gospels* is the only item that may be placed on the altar, and similarly from the preparation of the gifts until after Communion, only the Sacramentary, the vessels containing the bread and the wine, together with the corporal, purificator and the pall.

I remember well the Mass celebrated by my professor in Liturgy when I was still studying Theology. During the Eucharistic prayer he made sure there was nothing on the altar except the ciborium and the chalice containing the bread and wine. The candles were on a stand in front of the altar but not on the altar. Even the sacramentary was put aside. It was the first time my attention was completely focused on the sacrifice on the altar and made me feel the Eucharist was really a sacrifice before becoming a meal.

2.5 The Ambo

The ambo is a sign of the table of God's Word. It should be noble in design as to reflect the dignity of God's word. The ambo in old churches built in the Middle Ages show the dignity of God's word, as for instance, the XII century ambo in the Cathedral of Ravello in Italy. Like the altar there should be only one ambo, preferably stationary or fixed and its design should be in harmony with the altar in order to indicate the close link between the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. It should be large enough to be used by several persons on certain occasions, such as Palm Sunday (cf. *Lectionary for Mass*, nos. 32 and 34). I have seen a good number of Churches today with an ambo built according to these present norms of the Church.

Among other things, the Lectionary for Mass also emphasizes that the ambo should possess the best sound equipment so that the whole assembly may hear the readers, psalmist, homilist, and intercessor with ease.

2.6 The Episcopal and the Presidential Chair

The chair for the priest celebrant is the sign of his office as presider over the assembly and the orchestrator of its prayer (GIRM 310). It also represents his dignity as one who leads in the person of Christ. On the other hand, the cathedra is the chair from which a bishop of a diocese presides over worship in his cathedral church and is also the primary sign of his teaching authority in his diocese. It is recommended that the chair for

the priest celebrant should be proportionally smaller than the cathedra, since it is from the cathedra that the chair for the priest celebrant gets its meaning and importance.⁴

2.7 The Baptismal Font

In the Book of Blessings the baptismal font is called the tomb and the womb of the Church; tomb in as much as it is in the font that one dies in his old self; and womb in as much as it is from there too that one is born to a new life. Because of its importance, every cathedral and every parish church as well should have a baptistery.

One of the most beautiful baptismal fonts I have actually seen is in the parish church of St. Anthony de Padua in Paranaque City (Philippines). The font has provision for baptism by immersion not only for infants but also for adults. Its octagonal shape is a reminder of the eighth day when Jesus appeared to the disciples as the risen Lord, and at the same time points to that day outside time when every baptized Christian will rise from the dead and enter into eternal life. In fact one of the first baptismal fonts constructed in Rome was just beside the Basilica of St. John Lateran and its shape was octagonal. It was a place apart from the main body of the church so that catechumens who were not yet allowed to participate in the mystery of the Eucharist may at least be able to see how the baptism of new members takes place.

2.8 The Tabernacle and Eucharistic Devotion

Since the Eucharist is the *culmen et fons* (cf. SC 8), the Church encourages not only active participation of the faithful in the Eucharistic celebration but also the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament outside the Mass (cf. GIRM 315). This devotion may include brief visits to the Blessed Sacrament, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed for a short period of time, and perpetual adoration. The place for reserving the Eucharist should therefore be prominent and suitable for private adoration and prayer (cf. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, 9).

But it should be noted that the reservation today is secondary only to the celebration. Before Vatican II the tabernacle built resting on the main altar spoke loudly about the great importance attached to the reserved Eucharist, especially in the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass. Among several relics of saints exposed in between the six candles on the altar, the Blessed Sacrament was considered the most important relic that made the altar holy. After Vatican II, however, it was no longer considered essential to the Eucharistic celebration. And yet since it continues to play an important part in the life of the Church and in the life of individuals as well, it enjoys a pride of place in all catholic churches, though not necessarily at the center of the sanctuary.

Another devotional practice which the Church encourages is the procession of the Blessed Sacrament especially on the feast of Corpus Christi. Such procession is another powerful means of communication in as much as it proclaims the real presence of Christ and invites participation in its mystery. Moreover, just like any other church procession, it symbolizes our pilgrimage towards our final destination with Christ accompanying us.

2.9 The Presider and Homilist

⁴ Cf. Boyer, p. 63

Pope Benedict XVI emphasized in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, “Bishops, priests, deacons, each according to his proper rank, must consider the celebration of the liturgy as their principal duty (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 39).

The last time I celebrated a wedding liturgy was December last year. The couple used to attend my first Wednesday Mass in a factory and so they decided I should be the one to officiate their wedding. Some days after the wedding celebration the newly wed couple came back to visit me. As they were showing me the pictures, they told me some thing I heard for the first time. They said that many of their guests were so impressed by the celebration. And those guests were telling them it was the first time it happened that the wedding liturgy itself is what they will never forget. The beautiful chapel, the songs, the decorations, the liturgy itself with the comments, the prayers and the homily all together made a big impact.

Pope Benedict XVI said “The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their (the people’s) *actuosa participation*. The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness...” (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 38). Here I would like to underline the phrase “in all their richness” because the norms today give a lot of possibility for variation and adaptation. Let me read to you a part of article 39 of the Pope’s recent Apostolic Exhortation because in this article, the Pope is addressing himself to all bishops. The Pope wrote, the diocesan bishop as “the chief steward of the mysteries of God in the particular church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of its liturgical life (GIRM 22) ...because he is the celebrant par excellence within his Diocese. It is his responsibility to ensure unity and harmony in the celebrations taking place in his territory... I would ask that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgies which the Bishop celebrates in his Cathedral are carried out with complete respect for the *ars celebrandi*, so that they can be considered an example for the entire diocese.”

2.10 The Lectors and Other Ministers

Aside from what the ordained ministers as presiders can do to make the liturgical celebration a real encounter with God and with the Church, lectors and other ministers too have a lot to contribute. Lectors should read in such a way that people would normally understand what they hear without having to look at the text on their missalette. They should keep in mind that it is the Lord who continues to speak to his people by using their voice. Consequently, commentators do well by giving a brief introduction to the readings so that the people may have an idea of what they are about to hear, and so pay close attention to the readings.

While the lector proclaims the word on behalf of God, the psalmist prays the response on behalf of the people. And so he or she, in singing or reciting the psalm, should be able to express fully the sentiments of the assembly and inspire the people to pray.

2.11 The Music and Songs

In the *ars celebrandi* liturgical song has a pre-eminent place (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 42). Many years ago I used to celebrate Sunday Mass in the gymnasium of a drug rehabilitation center in Bicutan. The experience was amazing. The instrumentalists, cantors and soloists were really professionals and because their music was so engaging,

the inmates were singing and responding to the top of their voices. The whole gymnasium was resounding with the praises and prayers of those men and women, children, young and old who never came for Mass all their life except when they found themselves in that rehabilitation center. For many of them, the Sunday Mass was the only thing they looked forward to during the entire week mainly because of the singing and the preaching that enabled them to have an encounter with the divine and to receive some guidance in their life. Eucharist indeed has become summit and source for those people.

Many things can still be discussed regarding the communicative dimension of the liturgy but at this point let me just end by quoting what Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, "Equally important for a correct *ars celebrandi* is an attentiveness to the various kinds of language that the liturgy employs: words and music, gestures and silence, movement, the liturgical colors of the vestments. By its very nature the liturgy operates on different levels of communication which enable it to engage the whole human person. The simplicity of its gestures and the sobriety of its orderly sequence of signs communicate and inspire more than any contrived and inappropriate additions. Attentiveness and fidelity to the specific structure of the rite express both a recognition of the nature of Eucharist as a gift and, on the part of the minister, a docile openness to receiving this ineffable gift" (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 40).

Conclusion

Before Vatican II, the emphasis of the Church regarding the sacraments was laid on the requirements for their valid administration, namely, proper matter, proper form and the right intention of the presiding minister. On the part of the recipients, nothing else was required for validity except the absence of impediments. It was said, therefore, that if these requirements were met, then the sacraments give grace *ex opere operato*.

After Vatican II, however, the Church went beyond the minimum requirements for validity and emphasized the requirements for a fruitful celebration of the liturgy. On the part of the recipients, proper disposition as well as full, conscious and active participation was needed so that they may receive the fullness of grace that the sacraments offer. Prior to this they also need some kind of liturgical formation and catechesis that will lead them to an active and fruitful participation in the liturgy. It is in this sense that we can say the sacraments work *ex opere operantis*. On the part of the ministers, they need to develop the *ars celebrandi* (art of presiding), and just like the faithful, they too need to be in the proper disposition. Both of these requirements, although not necessary for validity, will certainly affect the proper disposition of the faithful. For instance, if the faithful know that the ordained minister has committed a mortal sin, they will certainly be ill-disposed to attend that liturgy, and would rather be absent than to commit the sin of thinking badly of their minister. On the other hand if people know the priest to be exemplary in holiness (or at least they know he is striving to be one) they will undoubtedly be inspired to take a more active role in the celebration. And finally, in the art of celebrating, the signs and symbols used can also affect to a certain degree the interior disposition and exterior participation of the faithful. And so apart from strict fidelity to the liturgical norms, appropriate variations and adaptations including inculturation can also have a big impact on the faithful.

Therefore, in response to the call of Vatican II, the Church today needs to move beyond the minimum requirements for a valid celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals. Although the minimum requirements can definitely offer the maximum grace, if the faithful have faith as

big as the mustard seed, normally, the minimum requirements are not enough to yield a fruitful encounter, since many of our faithful do not even have that little amount of faith. And so, the Church needs to do everything possible so that the whole celebration of the liturgy may become truly a communicative encounter between God and his people.

| Shift in Emphasis: | TRENT | VATICAN II |
|--------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | Validity | Fruitfulness |
| Signs | Proper Matter Proper Form | Variations Adaptations Creative Animation |
| Minister | Right Intention | Proper Disposition Art of Presiding |
| Recipients | No impediments (Age, Sex...) | Proper Disposition: Active Participation Liturgical Form'n & Catechesis |
| Effects | Sacramental Reality & Grace | (Sacramental Grace) "ex opera operantis" |

Allow me to end by narrating another experience. A couple of years ago I went to see how Sunday Mass was being celebrated in a shopping Mall near our seminary. It was not as bad as I thought. Although the ambience was not very conducive for worship because of the many distractions surrounding the Mass, the celebration still made an impact. The altar and the sanctuary were well decorated, and the sound system was good. The presider was lively, and his homily was well prepared. The other ministers were in their proper attire and carried out their service with dignity, devotion and attention. The songs and music were well selected and well rehearsed, and the choir engaged the assembly in singing along. In other words, despite the inadequacy of the architecture and interior design, but because the other elements of the liturgy were set on high, the celebration as a whole still became communicative of God's grace and elicited the peoples' participation in worship and thanksgiving.

VIII. MEALS AND CELEBRATIONS IN BUDDHIST CULTURE - Ven. Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh

My talk is about Meals and Celebration in Buddhist Culture and Perspective. You have been listening about the Eucharist. You have to clean up your mental slate a little bit because when we talk about meals and celebration in Buddhist context, it is very different from

Eucharist. I hope to bring about a better understanding for me as much as for you through this moment of dialogue.

In Buddhist context, there are two important meals in the life of the Buddha that might be of interest to you. The Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, started his life as Prince Siddhartha in the northern part of present India. I have to be very careful saying this, you know, because the people from Nepal will say “no! you said wrong.” He was born in Nepal. Lumbini, the birth place, is in the present Nepal. But of course at that time, 2500 years ago there was no Nepal, there was no India. So that’s why I chose to say he was born in the northern part of the present India, and of course in the border city of Lumbini.

He was married and had a son but left his royal image to seek for spiritual path. Having observed the suffering of life, old age, sickness and death and to be confirmed that all of us have to go through the same process, he asked a very existentialist question: how am I to overcome this suffering? So in Buddhism, this is a big quest. Because this prince had this spiritual quest, that’s why we are now entering into Buddhist teaching. If the prince did not have this quest, Buddhism will not be in reality.

His quest and the spiritual discovery six years after, wondering in the wilderness made him the Buddha. Once when he was enlightened, people called him the Buddha which means the fully enlightened one. There were many before him. He was just that one who discovered the truth at that time.

So that truth has always been there, like God is always there. Jesus comes and then you had the Messiah coming. Just at the time when the prince was practicing serious self-mortification, he stopped eating completely. He went through all kinds of self-mortification as we read in the text, breathing in and holding his breath and not breathing out until he turned green on his face. He stopped eating and sometimes he would hold his fist for so long that the nails start growing through the other side. I don’t know if that is true but that’s the way the text says.

Then after this self-mortification, he realized that this is not the path. This is not the way to lead him to realization. So he decided to eat. And when he did so, that was the first meal before enlightenment. So that meal, he thought a great deal about. He decided to come back to the middle path of taking food to sustain the body. The very first meal after the penance was offered by a woman called Sujata. Sujata made a vow to the gods that she would make an offering of rice pudding but the rice must be picked from the field when the rice just turned green. So when you pick this rice from the field, you squeeze it with your fingernail, some milk is coming out. That is young rice which is then cooked in honey and milk. She made a vow that she wanted a son. The son was born and she did not yet make an offering. It so happened that when the prince wanted to have his first meal, the same time, she wanted to also make an offering that she vowed long ago to do. So she made this rice pudding and she came to make the offering.

Having made the offering in gold tray, she left. The prince ate the rice pudding and then on the bank of the river made a vow that if he should be enlightened that night, may this gold tray float up the stream. The gold tray floated up stream and when down to the Naga world, the serpent’s world underneath. And apparently that Naga had been protecting the golden tray of the previous Buddhas also, so when this gold tray came down to that pile of gold trays in the underworld, as soon as he heard the sound, he knew that there is going to be another Buddha coming that night.

So the Buddha was enlightened that night, on the full moon night of the sixth month, according to the Lunar calendar. That day was called “Vesakh” in the Buddhist terminology. In India, you call it Vesakh month. That’s why we call this celebration, the Vesakh celebration.

So this is the symbolic meal in the Buddha’s life story. Some of you might have read some of these stories. We can discuss about symbolic meaning of the meal but the feminist often pointed out that the meal from which the Buddha gained his strength and became enlightened later was offered by a woman as life sustainer. It could also be symbolized as the balance between the mind and the body: the need to take care of the body so that the body could serve the spirit. We Buddhists do not give up the body completely like some of the ascetics in India. They don’t care for the body at all. They will be completely naked and they will be standing there for so long that creepers climb on their thighs. They completely deny their physical existence. This is not the case with Buddhism. Buddhism pays much attention to the body so that the body could serve the spirit.

The second meal in the Buddha’s life is the last meal before he passed away. The Buddha was 80 years old and he was making his last journey from Sravasthi to Kushinagar. There were just the two of them, himself and his cousin and attendant, Ananda. The Buddha decided that he will pass away in Kushinagar. He was invited to a meal that was offered by a man called Cunda. This Cunda was the son of a goldsmith in that area. At that meal, a particular kind of dish was offered and it was called sukramadava. It had been translated as soft pork. In the last two or three decades, Pali scholars disagreed and again tried to understand the word sukramadava. Sukra is pig, madava is soft so now it is translated as soft meat liked by the pigs which is supposed to be some kind of mushroom. I think in English you call it truffle, a kind of mushroom. But this particular kind of dish was very hard to digest. The Buddha ate but he said, whatever remains in the dish better bury it. He did not allow the monks to eat the leftover. It must have been hard for digestion. And after eating, his stool became bloody and soon after he died.

Before dying, he told Ananda, his attendant, that people will blame Cunda for offering this meal. He foresaw people’s reaction after his death. So he said there are two meals in his life and the people who offered these two meals make lots of merit – the highest merit. The first was the meal before he was enlightened and the last meal before he passed away. These were the two meals where the donors received highest merit. So this was in the Buddha’s lifetime.

Now, we talk about the monastic meals – for us now. The Buddha’s started a community of monks and nuns to continue his teaching. These monks and nuns I would rather use the word monks and female monks. Because when I use the word nuns, in Christianity, it would mean something different. But in Buddhism we have the *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhuni*, more or less of the same standard or level. We have four-fold Buddhists: the ordained male and female, and then the unordained laywomen and laymen. These four-fold Buddhists have equal share in Buddhism and the Buddha said that Buddhism will either decline or prosper in the future depending on these four-fold Buddhists.

So some Buddhists in the present day tend to be afraid of the Catholics, afraid of the Muslims, afraid of this and afraid of that. But I say, no! No outsiders can destroy Buddhism, it is the Buddhists themselves who are going to destroy Buddhism by not understanding Buddhism. The Buddha has said, long time ago and also he expected, when he established Buddhism, that the four-fold Buddhists will (1) study his teaching, (2) put his teaching into practice, and (3) be able to defend the true teaching. That was how he established Buddhism and he never said for once that Buddhism must be in the hands of the monks. No! Buddhists have each other. “You

take care of each other,” the Buddha said. He also said, Buddhism will decline when people do not practice the inside meditation. He was very clear on that. But when you neglect the practice, then eventually you bring about the downfall of Buddhism.

The life of monastic Buddhists start early in the morning with the “morning alms around.” That is the time when we are supposed to go for alms round. Right after ordination, we receive a clear instruction that if there is no robe, we are to make use of rags thrown at the funeral pyre where the people discarded the cloth used to cover the dead. That’s why it is patched because it is collected and then cut into squares and wash them clean and stitch them together. That’s why the robes that the Buddhist monastics are always patched.

And if you are in the forest and you have no medication, you use your urine and preserve it with some kind of herb that could be collected in the forest. And the third requirement is, for food, you go out for alms round. You don’t make a livelihood. Therefore, your life depends completely on the laypeople. So we are not supposed to cook. We go for alms round with our bowl and people make their offerings in the bowl.

The last requirement for the monks is for residence. If there is no residence, then you must be able to live even under the trees, in the cave, so very much living in a natural setting, and out of this livelihood or lifestyle that the monks live in the early period, we realize a much better understanding about nature – how we have to respect nature. In the history of the early monastic community we started out in a forest setting so we have a clear understanding of how to respect nature.

Now, I give you a little idea about the alms around – what we do. I have started this practice about seven years ago with my ordination from Sri Lanka. We go out for alms as required by the Buddha. We walk silently, barefoot, until we come to the first house and the laypeople set food in front of the house on a small chair or on a small table and they would invite verbally. They have to say it in a formal way then we would stop, open our bowl and they would put cooked rice into the bowl and the cooked food comes now in plastic bags.

But previously it is supposed to be everything in the bowl, so when you go to the first house, they might give rice and pumpkin. In the next house, they serve again rice and some curry. In the third house, rice and another dish placed on top. So when you come back to the monastery, you have a mixed bowl of everything. And that’s our training. We must not complain. Of course, we must know that it is tasty or salty or sweet or hot. We have not lost our sense of taste but we are not supposed to cling to the taste of our liking. That is supposed to be the practice.

But now, the food comes in plastic bags so we can sort them out and put it on the table in the monastery buffet style. And every time we receive food from the people, we have to give them blessing. In Bangkok, because life is so much in a rush the monks may not give a long blessing. They will only give a short blessing, in Pali – always in Pali – and people like to hear that Pali sound even though they don’t understand a word of it. So in our temple, we usually give two languages: first, we do the Pali, and then we translate into Thai.

Addressing people, of course, by this time we know each household – what kind of problems they have, what kind of joyful event they are expecting. So we usually give blessing according to that household. So this is actually a binding between the people surrounding the temple and the temple itself and we literally know all the families that we visit. It takes about one hour to finish the whole round. It is quite a good exercise, you know, when we come back we really have a great appetite after the morning round.

To the Buddhist this means, particularly with monastics, lay people could be quite fussy about arranging meals for monastics. It will be laid on the table and they would offer each dish into your hand. If you are a male offering to a female monk like me, then I have to have a piece of cloth to receive it, and vice versa. If ladies offer meals to male monks, then the monks would have to have a piece of cloth to take the food from them. And when you read sacred texts, they are very strict. Things that are offered to you must be lifted from the table or from wherever it is, high enough so that “a cat could crawl underneath.”

What does this mean? It means that the person who makes the offering really intends to offer. It's not like okay take this. With this kind of attitude, that person does not really want to give. Thai people go through lots of being very humble in making offerings, even kneeling on the floor, and all that. Westerners might feel a little awkward but that's how the Thai people would do it. And they would do that even in foreign countries, not adapting fully in the foreign countries and making some adjustments. But they still insist doing the traditional way whenever they can. What does it mean to offer not only food but other things to monks? It is a great way of making merit and Thai people love making merit. It is one country that is full of merit making.

At meal time when the monks are seated, then the lay people would be walking around seeing that the monks everything that they need and after the meal, then the monks give blessing. There is one blessing before the meal, that is, the monastics would look at the food that we are eating and they would say: This food that we are partaking, it is only to sustain the body, not for the taste. It is not for you to be greedy but just simply to keep this body going so that we can work better to serve Buddhism. So we are very mindful with our bowl. Then you will come to understand that during Buddhist meals particularly with the monastics, they don't talk. That is the polite form: they don't talk because they are supposed to be mindful of what they are eating. So they always set us separately. The monastics don't eat together. This idea of eating together is not normal. We are supposed to sit single file like this and each one of us would just be mindful with our bowl.

At the end of the meal, they give blessing and thanks to the donors. It might be one plate of rice in front me, but in order for this one plate of rice to be in front me I have to think about farmers tilling the soil, growing rice and taking care of the paddy fields. From there until you go to the market so the blessing goes through this whole line of how this plate of rice was obtained and laid down in front of me. That's the practice in Buddhism.

So this giving of rice, giving of food and giving of many things of fulfilling the “perfection.” In order for a person to become a buddha, a person should be able to fulfill ten perfections. Giving is number one. It is much practice in Thailand and offering food is very popular among the people of the country. So when we talk about the meals, when we talk about celebration, it is very different idea from Eucharist. But somehow through our discussion, we can bring about an understanding of both the Catholic practice as well as the Buddhist practice.

The Buddha said, for monastics, you go out for alms only. But the food that you receive in the morning, if you want to take lunch again, you can divide. Actually in our temple, there are three of us – three monastics – three bowls of rice. But we could feed the whole room so people who come for Sunday meeting, for meditation and the Dharma talk, we can feed all of them.

So we eat in the morning at 7:00 or 7:30 am and then we eat lunch at 11:30am. We are supposed to sit down at mid-day. Now mid-day differs from one country to another. Here in Thailand, it is 18 minutes after 12noon. It is considered mid-day. So if I sit down before 18 minutes after 12 noon, I could continue my meal until after that time. So that's why when you

come to this country you will find that the monastics are very fussy about lunch because it is their last meal of the day. After that there is no more meal, only drinks – fruit juices and tea and coffee, etc.

Also for us, some of us are very strict. They take only one meal a day and the lay people, you know, when you tell them that you take one meal a day – they really have high respect for you. That's not so good for health, it is not good to eat only one huge meal a day and starve the rest of the day. I have to confess that in the evenings, sometimes we get very hungry and we have to do with all kind of drinks. And then many of the monks end up contracting diabetes because the kind of drinks that people provide you in the evenings always have sugar – coffee, tea or whatever always have sugar. Sometimes, the monks simply take sugar like blocks of sugar cane and they drink hot water after that. So it is always sugar something sweet.

We don't have a sacred meal like the Eucharist. We just have celebrations, birthdays or New Year, general celebrations. Now what we eat differs between the Mahayana and the Theravada. In Mahayana, starting from China, they started as vegetarian so therefore, people who eat meat you will not find in Mahayana tradition. I took my first vow as a lay person in Taiwan and also following that tradition of not taking meat. But in Thailand, the monks may take meat.

This is because the Buddha actually allowed “pure” meat. Pure meat is that meat which you did not hear, you have not seen, you do not suspect that that animal was killed for you. That is considered pure and then you can take it. There is a story of a forest monk. He was going to visit this household and on the way to that household, he saw this trap for the fish. He knew right away that the fish inside the trap is going to be his lunch. He knew because he saw the fish so that when he arrived at the place, he was told that he will be served curry fish – that same fish that he saw. He refused to eat it. Of course he did not tell the house member why he did not want to eat. But he saw it with his own eyes so he did not eat. This is correct practice. But in consumeristic culture like Thailand, I think it is very difficult to say that we don't know that the meat was killed for us. We don't make clear connection but when we go to India, it is very clear. When you order chicken curry, they reach their hand into the chick cage and grab the live chicken and cut the throat. So when you order chicken curry, you order that a chicken be killed for you. So that's very clear. In Thailand, however, it is not clear because when you buy chicken, it is all wrapped in this foil or plastic and it's on the shelf in the supermarket. You don't make a connection that that chicken was killed for you. Kids nowadays don't realize that that chicken meat is the same chicken which was running in the front yard. They don't make that connection.

But I think this is also part of the culture, because Thai culture before we accepted Buddhism before the 13th century, we were not meat eaters. But we were eating fish and rice, very similar to Bengali culture. Those were our main staple. Meat comes after having opening ourselves to the Chinese communities who eat pork and beef. But before that, the major diet in Thailand was rice and fish.

So even accepting Buddhism, we have not given up our culture. That's why it is kind of mixed. The same also in animistic belief, we have not given up animism. We are Buddhists but Thai Buddhism is very different from Buddhists elsewhere because we have that part of animism still practiced in Thai Buddhism itself. You go to Myanmar, the same thing. They have “Nats.” I think that's true with Christianity also. Christianity also goes into a lot of inculturation with the local land that Christianity arrives at.

The meals in Buddhism are usually placed in the buffet table and everyone comes and takes the meal. But of course, the monks come first and then the lay people – the same kind of meal. I think equality must be there in a religious community where you don't eat separately and the abbot always gets the best kind of dishes – no, we don't have that. We all take the same kind of food but when we sit down and eat, we eat in silence separately.

I think it is very clear that we come together and become really one in the practice of meditation. There is one particular meditation technique that we do with the breathing and we connect with each other through this practice. We become one and at the end of the meditation session, we would have “dedication of merit.” This dedication of merit actually goes to all sentient beings. When the Buddhist talks about sentient beings, we cut across those whom we love and those whom we hate. We wish them both happiness and we wish them to be free from suffering. That is real unifying force among Buddhists. For that reason, the Mahayana not only limits to human beings but also animals. When we said sentient beings, it cut across human beings as well as animals.

The concept of praying to God is not present in Buddhism. We do not have this “God” concept. To be clearer, we Buddhists are not God-centered. Whether there is God or not, we are here already. Whether we were created by God or not, we are here already. But I would also say that Buddhism is not atheist who denies the existence of God completely. We are rather non-theist. We don't talk about God. God is not our central concern. So in that strict sense of Buddhism, there is no prayer because when you pray, you are praying to God. We rather do chanting. So before we start eating, we say that this food that we are partaking, I will consume without greed. This is a kind of reminder and self-reflection for the purification of this act of eating; that this act of eating is not to increase my greed. It is chanting but in a different sense from the Christian concept of prayer. Then we give blessing to the people who make this dish of rice possible for us to eat. For the blessing, we say the blessing for the people. We bless the people, asking them to be joyful that they have brought this food to sustain the monastics and because you sustain Buddhism – you prolong Buddhism, you prolong the life of Buddhism.

The community of Buddhist monks and female monks involve many recitations when we come together. There are rituals that must be done by the community: (1) ordination. This must be recognized by the community of monastics. Among monastics, we meet twice a month, during full moon and dark moon, for confession and recital of our monastic rules. The most serious one is Parasika, defeat, which means he had not been able to keep the precept. The most important precept he already transgressed and suppose nobody knew about it. But because he was in this community of giving ordination, the ordination that was performed with him will be invalid. So in my ordination, I had 12 monks and when asked why 12, my teacher says: “Just in case.” This is a very short answer but it implies a lot of meaning.

Monastic life is very important. Once I am ordained, I have to live as a monastic and living in the community. Why so? Because it is only when you live together that you realize you have to make a lot of adjustment. Living in monastic life is like putting potatoes directly from the soil where they have been picked into a bucket, place water and stir the whole lot. The potatoes themselves cleanse themselves by rubbing against each other. The result is a cleaner lot of potatoes. But of course sometimes, the potatoes jump out of the bucket. Some people cannot stand monastic life so they have to leave the community and we have people like that. So, ordained life in Buddhism is very much monastic life. That is where you can practice. That is when you get to see your own faults and purify and improve. Monastic life is very important but not easy. It is not easy to live together if you are not serious in your goal.

When the bell rings at 5:30am, I still want to have some more sleep. But I have to get up. In the beginning it was difficult for me to get up for the morning chanting and then I read the text. In this particular text the Buddha said that in the future, there will be people from good families joining the order and will be very lazy and he or she will get up after the sun has risen. I literally jumped up feeling as if the Buddha had actually addressed me in that particular text. We don't as monastics follow our own liking. We have to go according to the monastic "rhythm."

At 11:30am the bell rings again signaling lunch time. I could not say: "I am not hungry, I will eat later." No! We have two choices, either we eat or we don't eat. We cannot eat later because that is the monastic time. So this is the real training and the food that is laid on the table – three or four dishes – must be eaten. Whether you like it or not, that's your business to handle but we all eat the same thing. This monastic life, this community, is very important.

Some of you who have known me when I was a lay person, with long nails all painted red. That was the kind of lifestyle that I led and then I never rode the scooter because my hair will then fly all over. Now, I shaved my head and this is the permanent hairstyle that can go on any vehicle. It's a simple lifestyle. In Buddhism, monastics talk about very simple – down to earth. This robe is a uniform which is uni-sex. Monks and female monks wear the same thing – exactly the same thing – and this very fashionable. It's been on from the Buddha's time up till now. So, when you cut all the frills of life, and you just answer to the basic necessity and the rest of the time when you can really remain focused. In Christian terms, "focus for God's work." We Buddhists let go of the frills. Many people are very worried of my cotton bag. They always want to make a fancy bag for me. This is the bag that I was ordained with seven years ago and I am still happy with it. People come and fuss around me also, the lay people. They bring new set of robes, shiny ones, and the next week they come and check. "Venerable Mother, you are not wearing my robe." I answer: "Oh, I thought you already offered to me. How is it you're saying that it is your robe?" I mean, if I change the robe every week I would be a fashion lady. I am no longer a monk. So, we always have to be reminded of what we are here for. We are here to let go of the frills of life so that we can focus clearly.

Once you have accepted this life, in Christianity you would call it "the call from God." Once you have received this call from God, the interests of life which varies and are scattered – and you really waste your energy a great deal doing a hundred other things. But once ordained, you should be very focused. Your path should be clear. We can let go of many things. So I stopped completely the first two years to break away from my normal way of life as a lay person. I stopped reading newspapers. I stopped watching television. We don't have television set in the monastery. Just so that we are clear that this is another passage of life that we have chosen as monks. So, life has become very focused and the energy that comes is marvelous. I never had this kind of energy when I was a lay person. But once you are ordained and you are very clear, in your goal, in your spiritual goal and commitment, I don't know how many years I have in life. I really don't know. But whatever I have, I put it in this tray and I offer it to the Buddha. This is my offering. Total, complete, simple.

So, when we have that kind of understanding in our part, I think we have lots of energy to work. It's not penance, but to us it is "simplicity." This simplicity brings us back down to the connection with nature.

There is great hospitality in Buddhists from where I come from. People can stay in monasteries can stay and also eat. In the modern age, you go for alms to support your self. Does that mean that you only take alms from people, houses around you, or just like us Catholic

– we also beg digitally, through the Internet. Is there a sense of international support also and what do you do, suppose you are self sufficient in a way and do you let people also come to monasteries for food like in Catholic institutions like that of Mother Theresa? Poor people line up there for food. Does it work both ways like this for you?

When people go to the temple for food, they are not expected to pay. They are going to be fed with whatever the monks can offer. In our temple, we go for alms-round twice a week. Sunday is our regular day and then on Buddhist day. Buddhist day keeps on shifting so you have to look at the Thai calendar where there is a small Buddha image printed or a sign of the moon on the calendar, and that is every week. So this week, I think Buddhist day falls on Saturday. So we go out on Saturday and Sunday. And we receive alms from people bringing fresh foods to the temple. Sometimes it is their birthday. They always like to make offering on birthday so we have many birthdays coming up. Or otherwise, people just come and offer money. We have this big donation once a year. That is the robe offering ceremony, which is called Kathina. But now actually, it means donation so that we could collect if we have construction that is going on in the temple. That is once a year collection.

Generally, the donation comes from people around the world. In my organization, it is a bit international so sometimes we get donations, small donations, but from many people. We try to avoid big donations from a single source because that could mean “control.” You will understand that once you have one big donor, you tend to end up being controlled by that donor. This will create very unhappy situations.

In the Catholic tradition, when someone joins to become a priest or religious nun, it's about after 20-25 years of age. But we see sometimes, small kids and they are in the temples like “child monks.” How long to they stay there and can they leave in between?

Questions like this will highlight certain facets of Buddhism. The very first novice was the Buddha's own son. He was only seven years old. In the text, it did not say seven years old. This is an interpretation found in the commentary afterwards. If a boy is old enough to know how to drive away the crows from the paddy fields, then he can join the order. Then the commentary says “seven years old.” In Thailand, mostly poor kids become monks. Their parents think that if they become ordained, this is their access for higher education. So they get training from the monks and they are sent to school – general public school as well as Buddhist schools. And then when they reach the age of 20, there is full ordination. So yes, school age kids can be trained as monks but they are called “novices” not for life.

Just two days ago, I read a report from a research saying that the number of monks dropped drastically in Thailand. The researcher actually suggested that maybe the government should consider the ordination of women. That's why I was interested. In Thailand, they don't have ordination of women.

Coming back to the question of meals: I wonder whether if this understanding is correct. But in Buddhism, the communion – union – among members is established through mindfulness which is a sign of transcending oneself egoic self, getting out of oneself. And that brings about a deeper union with one another. Even meal sayeth together, eaten together in silence would mean that the silence becomes the medium of a deeper level of communication. And so, even in our Christian tradition, we have a very great insistence that when you have received the sacred

food, ideally you should be in silence. But unfortunately, the noisy world captures us and we want to shout to the top of our voice and all the rest after the meal is over and we have a “hell” of a noise in the Churches. Though the Popes and the Vatican Council have been all saying that there must be silence, but we tend to think that we become somebody and that we are somebody if we make noise. Am I right?

You are right and I am very happy that you brought out this mindfulness – the practice of mindfulness. You are very right. I experienced that when I went to Assisi in the dining room there was complete silence. This is still observed and each priest come in with his tray of food and the benches are very long and you sit on either side. It is the same idea. So I was very happy when I was in Assisi and said to myself, “This is exactly the same way that we practice in our community.” So when we go back to the spirit, we are talking of the same thing.

Do you think therefore, the Christian Churches in Asia where religions make an appeal to go the center of one’s being need a change?

It is always a learning process. There is something good and there is something bad. Some Western people who came to the forest monastery for the first time, they could not stand the silence during meals. These people are so unfriendly (they think), they don’t even talk to me during meal time. That’s because they don’t understand the practice that we are doing. They say: “I will never go back to this monastery again because they are very unfriendly.” For it is read in another way. But actually, that is the time when we have to be connected spiritually rather than verbally.

Even in my monastery, I often have to remind them that meal time is silence. It is very difficult for human nature. I told them, you can speak but don’t talk. Now, you have to differentiate between “speak” and “talk.” If I sit next to Father, I could say: “Father, could I have salt.” This is speaking. But if I turn to the other and ask: “Oh Mr so and so, how many children do you have?” This is talking, not speaking. If you get yourself involved in unnecessary conversation at meal time, it is not appropriate.

From my point of view as a Christian, I always entertain and am enthralled by this idea that Buddhism could be a fertile ground for Christianity in the sense that we see Buddhists perfecting themselves to become Christians. The fulfillment of Buddhism could be found in Christianity. But of course you will have to see it in a different way, and see Christianity as coming from outside and for you it should never happen, that somebody from outside will destroy Buddhism. In connection with the meals taken in the Buddhist culture, I was impressed by this silence during the meal where you are mindful of not only of yourself eating because you want to eat but because simply you want to sustain the body and you are mindful also of those people who have contributed the food to you. Is there a chance when the fellowship that happens among those who eat the meal will enjoy fellowship with the one who provided the meal – that One, the God whom we recognize – but you do not think of this because in Buddhism as you said is a non-theist. Is there a chance that Buddhism would make that next step of being God-centered?

I think it is the other way around. When can Christians leave the idea of a “God-head”? You see, when we talk about Nirvana, we talk about Buddha-hood. We are not talking about one particular person. We are not talking about personified God. We get stuck with this personified

God in Christianity. If you can take one step further to talk about God without having that old man as God – go beyond – and go to let's say “godliness.” Then we talk about the same thing. I think we talk about the same thing but we get stuck with terminologies. So, we talk about climbing the mountains and we climb the same mountain. But we disagree because each one of us has not reached the top of the mountain. You are climbing from that end, while I climb from this end. You see a deer, I see a tiger. If we are really true to our spiritual commitment, we don't have to disagree whether you see a deer and I see a tiger. Just keep on going. But once when we get there, we just look at each other's eyes and it's just the experience of that Oneness: whether you call it God, and I call it Nirvana; or whether I call it Enlightenment, and you call it God. You know, the problem we have is that because we are climbing the mountain at different spots, we don't realize that we start from different entrances, so to say. So, I think that if each one of us is serious in our own practice, we go to the same thing.

In Hong Kong, each year the Buddhist leaders organize a grand celebration on the birthday of Buddha. After their liturgical celebration, they also entertain us with vegetarian banquet in the hotel even. So, how would you interpret this or what comment could you give as a Buddhist in Thailand on this arrangement?

I would just go along and enjoy the banquet. It is a celebration we can look at from different levels and simply enjoy the present moment.

You may want to hear about my passage into ordained life. When we were ordained, we say to the preceptor: “I will try my best to lessen my suffering. I will try my best to be enlightened.” That is our goal – our goal that we go forward to. Of course, we have to let go of our family. In my case, I had to take a divorce but I waited until my sons were grown. The youngest one was 24 when I took ordination. I don't have bad feelings that I left them half-way.

As I said earlier, during the Buddha's time, he set up the four-fold Buddhists. The bhikkhus, male monks, female monks, lay men and lay women. These four-fold Buddhists must take care of Buddhism itself. But when it came to Thailand, we never had ordained women. We started as a nation since the 13th century and we never had ordination of women. Ordination of women had to start like this: a woman aspirant to monk-hood must first be ordained by a chapter of bhikkhunis, a chapter of ordained nuns. In the same day, you have to be ordained by a chapter of male monks. But in a country with no ordained female monks, you could not possibly start the ordination process. That's why I had to go to Sri Lanka to receive this lineage. But the community here, the church here, has been comfortable with the idea that the community or church would only have male monks. This went on for the last 700 years. Legally, I have not done anything wrong but in order for the government to accept me, the church has to accept me first. The government will listen to what the church has to say.

Now the church defines the word “sangha” to mean the community of monks only, whereas the Buddha has established both the bhikkhus (male monks) as well as female monks. So this is where we got stuck. I used to host a television program and your organization has awarded the last two years of my work. When I was ordained, the government channel refused to acknowledge my new status. They say that because of my ordained status, I will confuse the children. So, sometimes they would have my program in but without the word “bhikkhuni” which means ordained nun. And without my face, they use only my voice. This is a very strange situation that we find ourselves in but the world is very small. Now with Internet, we are

connected. So, the world outside I think know more about the situation and the ordination of women in Thailand more than the Thai people.

IX. THE EUSCHARIST AND INCULTURATION: A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE - *Jacob Theckanath, FABC-OE Executive Secretary*

Introduction

Inculturation is a topic that is very important and urgent for the Church in Asia. Much reflection, theologizing, creative efforts, critique and criticism have taken place in different parts of Asia, particularly during the past four decades. It is significant that Pope John Paul II used the words, 'culture', 'cultural' and 'inculturation' 101 times in *Ecclesia in Asia*. This shows how great an engagement inculturation demands in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Our focus is on inculturation of the Eucharistic liturgy and the challenge and opportunities from a communication perspective.

I shall first make a few reflections viewing the issue inculturation through the lens of dialogue. For any genuine communication is a dialogue. Since inculturation is the total process of becoming incarnate in a people, we need to look at it in its triple dimension, namely, dialogue with the religions, the poor and cultures of Asia, as the FABC has consistently done from the very beginning. Secondly, I shall describe some examples of inculturation in the Eucharistic liturgy, mainly the efforts made in India, and in the Philippines. All this is in view of our involvement in the communicative mission in, through & with the Eucharist.

I. Eucharist as Communication

Let us recall the '*who? whom/what?, and to whom?*' of the communication-mission in the Eucharistic liturgy.

Who?: It is God and his people communicating. The local church in communion with the universal church gives audibility and visibility to this communication in every Eucharistic celebration.

Whom/what?: It is total self-communication of God through Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

To whom? To the Church and to the world – to all people (the Church as the chosen medium). In reflecting on inculturation, it is important to recognize that every form of communication of God is destined for the whole world. The Eucharistic communication has the same universal destination.

Dialogic communication

Dialogue is the Bible's overarching and paradigmatic frame within which we are invited to view God-human, inter-human and human-cosmic relationship. The Bible begins with God speaking to creation and ends with Jesus speaking to his Bride: "Yes, I am coming soon" and the Bride responding "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 20:20).

This dialogue is ultimately in view of realizing a new heaven and a new earth, –of making all things new. It is not surprising that the climax of this dialogue takes the shape of a banquet – the supreme archetype of dialogue (Rev 19:9). God's dialogue with humanity and

human response takes place in and through the Logos (become incarnate) and continues in the heart of the world. Therefore everywhere there is what Karl Rahner calls “the liturgy of the world.” The Eucharist becomes the concrete and authentic moment of such a dialogic experience, realizing in a symbolic, sacramental event. Thus the Eucharist is dialogue par excellence in our world.

God’s dialogue with the world

God’s dialogue in Jesus is a communication with the whole world. It takes concrete shape in the liturgy of the Church. Anyone who participates in this dialogue is engaging in the *Missio Dei* for the whole world. Since dialogue constitutes the very being of the Church, every action of the Church acquires a dialogic character. Every Eucharist is the expression of the mission of communication-dialogue. Since the very identity of the Church is to be the sacrament of divine dialogue in the world, whatever is related to the Church must have dialogue as its characteristic mark. The Eucharist thus becomes the epiphany of the Church, the action through which she becomes uniquely visible.

Eucharist is Church on Mission

“An Authentically Eucharistic Church is a missionary church.”¹ The Eucharist is the energizer of the Church on mission. The Church that ‘makes’ the Eucharist is itself formed, nourished and sent forth by the same Eucharist. Thus our identity (who we are) and our mission coalesce in the Eucharistic action. Pope Benedict XVI adapts the celebrated phrase of the Council to show the link between the Eucharist and Mission. “The Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the Church’s life but also of her mission.”²

Communicative Inculturation

The FABC has from its inception committed itself to the vision that dialogue should characterize mission in Asia, envisioning a church marked by triple dialogue. The VII plenary Assembly articulated it within an integral vision: “That the Church in Asia is not so much to do dialogue with cultures and religions and the poor in isolated manner. But that everything that the Church is and does must be shaped by triple dialogue.” “For thirty years, as we have tried to reformulate our Christian identity in Asia, we have addressed different issues, one after another: evangelization, inculturation, dialogue, the Asian-ness of the Church, justice, the option for the poor, etc. ... We need to feel and act “integrally” ... Inculturation, dialogue, justice and the option for the poor are aspects of *whatever* we do”.³ Inculturation is integral to the evangelizing mission of the Church, and therefore of the liturgical celebration. That is why Pope John Paul said: “A faith which has not become inculturated is a faith which has not been fully received, which has not been completely thought through, which has not been fully lived.”⁴

When our Eucharistic celebration becomes the incarnation of our Christian faith, its celebration and living in a given cultural context and it animates the culture from within and transforms it in the light of Christ then we are in the process of becoming an incarnate and indigenous local church. In such a process Christophany takes place.

What is crucial for our authentic communicative evangelization is that faith, justice, inculturation and dialogue are joined together as inseparable aspects of our -Eucharistic liturgy and spirituality as the one process of evangelization.

Our celebrations do not belong to an exclusive club or a secret society. What we celebrate is God’s communication to the whole world through Jesus. What we do among us is, in fact, a

public act of proclamation. It can happen only when we use the language, the idiom, the signs and symbols, the joys, aspirations, the struggles of all people who form the wider community around us. If it is a proclamation of God's mighty deeds in Jesus, the people around us have a right to understand what we are about in our liturgy. We have a duty to communicate the meaning of life in the light of the Christ-event that is celebrated. Thus our liturgy must become proclamational, in its words, symbols and in all that constitute the liturgical action.

Inculturation is a two way process as Vatican II expressed it so vividly through the imagery of the seed and the soil. Church and culture both enrich each other. There is a mutual challenge and influence. At the same time the evangelizing mission of the Church requires that the Eucharistic liturgy contributes to the evangelization of cultures. The words of Pope Benedict XVI are very pertinent: "...it is clear that the Eucharistic mystery puts us in dialogue with various cultures, but also in some way challenges them. The intercultural character of this new worship, this *logike latreia*, needs to be recognized."⁵ This demands evangelization of cultures in the light of the mystery of Christ.

II. Examples of Inculturation

In this section I shall first deal with the official inculturation efforts made in the Roman Rite in India. We shall briefly look at the Post-Vatican II initiatives undertaken by the National Episcopal Commission for Liturgy and the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI).⁶

1. Inculturation of the Eucharist in India - The two-phase programme of inculturation

The first phase is meant for providing meaningful translations in the idiom of local languages and creating an Indian atmosphere of worship. India is multi-cultural, with many cultures and sub-cultures and subaltern cultures. It is not possible to identify one culture as the culture of India. This is true of most of the countries of Asia. Then why did the national Liturgy Commission attempt to provide the elements of inculturation for the Eucharistic liturgy? It was mainly for a very practical reason. People in different states of India needed some inspiration and models. The purpose was to prepare a model of celebration which will give some orientation and inspiration for those in the regions to undertake similar efforts; to encourage people to do something in their linguistic, cultural milieu. There was at no time the pretension to make it the Indian order of Mass. However, several of the elements in the 12-point inculturation proposal would be applicable to a large number of people, with some very notable exceptions as the Tribals, and in some cases, the Dalits.

The second phase consisted in the composition of original prayer texts, especially the Anaphora or Eucharistic prayer and inculturated rituals.

The First Phase: "the 12 points of adaptation"

The first concern was to identify some elements that would in some way contribute to the creation of an Indian atmosphere of worship: Indian gestures, postures, forms of worship, objects and symbols, vestments, melody and music, art and architecture, etc. The 12 points were then integrated into a coherent whole in a celebration with some rituals, chants and prayers in what is known as "An Order of Mass for India". In this latter effort there is a predominantly classical flavour, which makes the tribals and dalits distance themselves from such a model. This is because of the use of chants in classical language and some symbols associated with the high caste communities.

Liturgy is not simply words about God or to God. It is love that is communicated and celebrated. And symbols are the best medium for expressing it. For symbols are all about relationship; symbols engage persons in relationship. Liturgy communicates a relationship powerfully through words, symbols, movement, posture and gesture, art and architecture and the gathering of the people, and by the very dynamics of the celebration. In the Eucharist the verbal and the non-verbal communication all engage us in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. The verbal and the non-verbal aspects have a great role to play in the celebration.

God communicates himself through what is other than himself (K. Rahner). This is the deepest reason for the role of symbols and signs in the liturgy of the Church, and in worship in general. It is therefore important that we recognize the symbolic and mediatory role of all the elements of the liturgy. Besides, the vision of the total person of the worshipper (body, mind, heart and spirit) must influence our liturgy. The role of senses and even feelings (without being emotional) is very important in the act of worship. The General instruction of Roman Missal states: "... The celebration [should be] planned in such a way that it brings about in the faithful participation IN BODY and spirit"⁷

Symbols belonging to a cultural tradition are capable of expressing the relationship in a uniquely communicative manner. The purpose of the symbols is to manifest more clearly and experience relationship and make meaning more accessible and more relevant, through which their inner chords would be awakened. Therefore the need of finding symbols that are in common use among a particular people. The most important symbols that are used in this form of celebration are water, light/fire and flowers, symbolic gestures, postures etc.

The excerpts from letter of approval from the Vatican, reproduced below, contains all the 12 points of adaptation:

1. "The posture during Mass, both for priests and the faithful, may be adapted to local usage, that is, sitting on the floor, standing and the like; footwear may be removed also.
2. Genuflections may be replaced by the profound bow with the anjali hasta.
3. A panchanga pranam by both priests and faithful can take place before the liturgy of the word as part of the Penitential rite and at the conclusion of the Anaphora.
4. Kissing of objects may be adapted to local custom, that is, touching the object with one's fingers or palm of one's hand and bringing the hands to one's eyes or forehead.
5. The kiss of peace could be given by the exchange of the anjali hasta and/or the placing the hands of the giver between the hands of the recipient.
6. Incense could be made more use of in liturgical services. The receptacle could be the simple incense bowl with handle.
7. The vestments could be simplified. A single tunic-type chasuble with a stole (angavastra) could replace the traditional vestments of the Roman rite. Samples of this change are to be forwarded to the "Consilium".
8. The corporal could be replaced by a tray (thali or thamboola thattu) of fitting material.
9. Oil lamps could be used instead of candles.
10. The preparatory rite of the Mass may include:
 - a. the presentation of gifts
 - b. the welcome of the celebrant in an Indian way, eg. With a single arati, washing of hands, etc.
 - c. the lighting of the lamp
 - d. the greeting of peace among the faithful in sign of mutual reconciliation

11. In the “oratio fidelium” some spontaneity may be permitted both with regard to its structure and the formulation of the intentions. The Universal aspect of the Church, however, should not be left in oblivion.
12. In the offertory rite, and at the conclusion of the Anaphora the Indian form of worship may be integrated, that is, double or triple arati of flowers and/or incense, and/or light.

The above-mentioned adaptations can be put into effect by the Episcopal Conference and local hierarchies in places where they see fit and in the degree and measure that they think fitting for the faithful.

Certain symbols were coherently incorporated into a manner of celebrating the Eucharist. Such celebration highlights among others the following aspects:

The symbol of the Oil lamp that is solemnly lit indicates the presence of Christ in the midst of the Assembly. It is a solemn rite which the priest himself performs, just like in the case of the paschal candle. Then there is the welcoming of this light by extending the hands over the flame and bringing the warmth and the light on to one’s forehead and eyes, to experience the illuminating presence of Jesus Christ the light of the world.

Another symbol that is used in a solemn way is water, which is blessed with chants and then sprinkled over the altar and the people. Flowers are used at various occasions and waving of flowers, incense and light in the form of arati (homage) is part of the celebration. Eight flowers representing 8 directions of the earth/ universe are placed around the gifts of bread and wine to represent the gathering of everything and every one from all the 8 corners of the world. It is a form of consecration of the world.

The introductory rites are meant to communicate that we are part of the cosmos, of the universe. That communication is done in liturgical context of invocations, and prayer – all meant to awaken the believing community that God pervades the universe in which we live. That awakening is the first conversion that is required to engage in worship. This movement of conversion takes place step by step in the rite from exterior to the interior - a typical movement of concentration in Asian spiritual traditions. This initial communication makes the believing community to experience the earth, water, light/fire etc as cosmic symbols of the divine and to feel a bond with them and through them to the God who indwells in the entire universe.

Another aspect of the 12 points is the involvement of the body in the act of worship. An important form of communication within liturgy is that we, in all our wholeness of body, mind and spirit are involved in the celebrative event. There are gestures of the whole body, of the hands and fingers etc. The gestural language and body involvement make the celebration a holistic communication and communion. Among some communities like, the tribals and dalits particularly there are also dances as part of the entrance rite and at processions for enthronement of the Lectionary or the Book of the Gospels, offertory procession etc. Thus the body plays an active role in the ritual event, in a way making total communication.

There are moments of homage to the community, to the presider, to the Bible and the Eucharistic species, known as arati. In it there is a powerful communication through a blend of gestures, movements and rhythm and melody. In short the attempt is to be inserted into the cultural communication world of the people of whom Christian form part and from within to give expression to the Christian faith and worship.

Second Phase:

Inculturation proper: Anaphora or Eucharistic Prayer for India

In 1969, efforts to compose a new Indian Anaphora began. A draft was prepared in 1970. The Bishops discussed the text in 1972; but due to the fact it did not receive the required two thirds majority votes, it was not forwarded to Rome. Two decades later, (in 1992) the CCBI (Latin Rite) approved the same Eucharistic prayer with minor modifications, with an overwhelming (near-unanimous) majority. However its use is not yet permitted in India.

Highlights of “A Eucharistic Prayer for India”

What is given below is only some excerpts for the sake of looking some of its highlights

There are several parts in the Eucharistic prayer. The first part highlights the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and space) as God’s gift to humans, as the symbols of God’s creative action and through which he is present to the whole universe and humanity. Some of the planets are also mentioned in order to manifest and proclaim that in God’s plan there is a link between them and the earth and the humans, which must be respected.

The second stanza brings out the theme of life as the gift of God. The mountains, rivers and seas are considered sacred by people as God himself is the source of all living things. The 3rd stanza brings out the theme of the glory of humans endowed with knowledge etc., a theme which provides the underpinnings for the spirituality of the path of knowledge or contemplation.

Stanzas 4-7 speak successively of the covenants: the cosmic covenant with all realities and humans, and particularly in the Indian context, in stanza five, there is a hint at the tribal and animistic religions which recognise the divine as Power in created realities, especially in nature. There is a subtle mention of the Hindu approach to liberation through the path of knowledge, devotion and the path of action/duty. There is a reference to the spiritual insight of Buddhism and Jainism and Islam. All this is done so subtly without mentioning any religion by name. This is followed by the covenant with Abraham, culminating in Jesus Christ.

Some Excerpts:

P. God of all creation/ it is right that we should give you thanks and glory:/You are the supreme Lord of the universe/you fill and sustain everything around us.

Cong: Great are the wonders of your creation.

P. You turned with the touch of your hand,/ chaos into order, darkness into light. You created the heavens/adorning them with sun, moon and stars./ You are the source of the wind’s might and the fire’s heat/of the water’s coolness and the earth’s stability. *Cong:* Response

P. In your image you formed human beings/, male and female you created them/ you entrusted the earth to their care/ and called them to share/ in your being, knowledge and bliss.

Cong: Response

P. Therefore in the name of every creature under heaven/ we join the angels and saints as they sing.

Cong: Holy, Holy

P. God of all nations/you desire all humankind to reach the shores of salvation./ You are the hope and future/ of all who search for you with a sincere heart/ You are the Power Almighty/ adored as presence hidden in nature.

Cong: Response

P. You reveal yourself/to seers/ in their quest for knowledge/ to the devout approaching you through the path of love/ to those seeking you through sacrifice and renunciation./ You enlighten the hearts that long for release.

Cong: Response

P. By the conquest of desire and universal kindness./ You show mercy to those who submit/ to your inscrutable decrees.

Cong: We praise you, God of our salvation

God of all ages/ Lord most kind and merciful/ as a sign of your grace and love for all humanity/ you called Abraham to be the father of your people/ You chose Moses to liberate your oppressed children./ Through your mighty deeds/ You formed them into a people/ through your prophets you taught them to long for the day of the Saviour/ the day of peace and salvation. *Cong:* Response

O God invisible/ at the favourable time/ you were pleased to become visible to us./ Your Word, your only Begotten Son/ took our human condition/ and was born of the Virgin Mary./ Supreme Master and Teacher/ he imparted the words of eternal life./ Prophet of your Kingdom,/ he denounced all evil/ and showed the way to the fullness of life.

Cong: Response

At the supper/ which he longed to share with his disciples/ your Son, Jesus Christ,/ showed the depth of his love./ Though Lord and Master,/ he did the humble work of a servant/ by washing their feet.....

Bless the efforts of all those labour/ to build up our country as a nation,/ where the poor and the hungry will have their fill,/ where all people will live in harmony,/ where justice and peace, unity and love will reign. *Cong. Response:* Keep us one in mind and heart, O Lord our God. or We proclaim your glory, God of our redemption.

Grant to all the departed/ a share in your bliss./ Welcome them and all of us into your Kingdom/ where Mary the Virgin Mother of God/ the apostles and martyrs/ the saints of all lands and ages/ Thomas, Bartholomew, Francis Xavier.../ unceasingly pray for us/ until we share in the riches of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. *Cong. Response:* Keep us one in mind and heart, O Lord our God.

or We proclaim your glory, God for your redemption.

In this way, the Eucharistic prayer and symbolic elements of the liturgy attempt to communicate a new relationship with God as the Lord of all and a new bond with people of other religions, with the poor and with cultures, without in any compromising the unique role of Jesus Christ in the history of salvation. This is an effort to combine faith, dialogue with regions, cultures and the poor, and a cosmic spirituality, all seen in a holistic perspective.

Eucharist and Ecological/cosmic spirituality

Asia is marked by the reverence for the earth and the whole cosmos. The earth is Mother. Religiosity and spirituality in Asia are intimately linked to the cosmic realities. The earth is considered to have healing and purifying power.

Therefore the Eucharist is at the same time the mystery of God in our earth. Through the primal realities of the earth, water and energy (fire), Jesus chose to enter into our life in a new and human way

“The Lord declares that the wine, which is part of creation, is his own blood and makes it the nourishment of our blood; he declares that the bread which is also part of creation is his own body and makes it the nourishment of our body”⁸

Pope Benedict XVI says: “The Eucharist itself powerfully illuminates human history and the whole cosmos....The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit...The relationship between the Eucharist and the cosmos helps us to see the unity of God’s plan and to grasp the profound relationship between creation and the “new creation” inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ....”⁹

2. Elements of the Inculturated Eucharistic Celebration in the Philippines *(Misa ng bayang Pilipino)*

I give below some information I received about the elements of the Eucharistic celebration prepared in the early 80s, which was approved by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and which was sent to Rome. The Vatican Congregation asked for some changes and corrections. It was being used, as far as I know, during some feasts and solemnities.

Entrance procession: The priest carries a big cross.

Sign of the Cross: The priest makes the sign of the cross, with the Cross carried to the sanctuary, over the people when they make the sign of the Cross.

The people venerate the cross by singing the response

Penitential rite: People kneel down and sprinkling with water takes place

The sign of peace follows, at this stage.

Liturgy of the Word

For reading, the lector gets the blessing from the priest in a typical philippino way

Prayers of the faithful: people kneel down and pray the intercessions

Presentation of the gifts: Offerings are brought in for blessing in a typical philippino way

Before the Eucharistic prayer the candles on the alter are lit and the sign of the cross is made

Communion: The priest first gives communion to the people and then he receives communion

Final blessing: the priest blesses the people with the Cross.

The actual celebration is very rich and solemn with a these cultural and spiritual elements, which this scanty description cannot capture at all.

Conclusion:

What is said by the Pontifical Biblical Commission about the risks involved in the actualization of the Bible is relevant in the context of our concern for an inculturated Eucharist that is communicative enough in the heart of Asia.: “In any case, the risk of error does not constitute a valid objection against performing what is necessary task: that of bringing the message of the Bible to the ears and hearts of the people of our time”¹⁰

X. FINAL STATEMENT : “Eucharist as Communication” - 12th Annual Bishops' Meet

Introduction

We, the 35 participants of the 12th Bishops' Meet 2007 coming from 15 countries and consisting of Bishops and secretaries of National communication offices/commissions, experts and others involved in the field of social communication gathered together in Bangkok, Thailand from November 26th to December 1st, 2007. We reflected and shared on the “Eucharist as Communication,” its challenges and opportunities for the Church in Asia. Insightful presentations by those involved in communication, theology, liturgy, anthropology, pastoral ministry and other religions deepened our understanding of the communication reality of the Eucharist. The sharing of many creative initiatives and projects in social communication by the national secretaries gave us a panoramic view of the new areopagus of the communication world and the Church's involvement in different parts of Asia. At the same time, we were awakened to the challenging tasks that await us. All this was done in a spiritual atmosphere of journeying with the Eucharistic Lord, through Eucharistic celebrations and adoration. Our coming together has contributed to a renewed enthusiasm and commitment in us to deepen and live the Eucharist as “the most intimate form of communion and communication possible in this life” (*Communio et Progressio*, no. 11).

We hope that our considerations and experiences will further assist our member conferences for the preparation of the next FABC Plenary Assembly to be held in January 2009 on the theme “Living the Eucharist in Asia.”

The Pastoral Instruction “*Communio et Progressio*” (1971) expresses the profound meaning of communication as “giving of self in love” (no. 11). In the Eucharist, the “culminating moment of communication”, Jesus' self-giving becomes an abiding gift to us and to the whole world till the end of times. It is the most intimate and deepest form of communion. If social communication can be defined as “sharing of meaning through signs,” then this sharing of meaning becomes a reality in the Eucharist as a divine gift for us. The meaning of human life can be fully communicated only in the mystery of the Eucharistic Jesus.

- The Eucharist draws us into the very mission of Jesus: the communication of the divine gift of love. “We cannot approach the Eucharist,” as Pope Benedict XVI tells us, “without being drawn into the mission, which beginning in the heart of God, is meant to reach all people” (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, no.84). But how can this happen without proper and extensive communication? In the course of our search and sharing, we discerned certain orientations for the communication ministry in the perspective of the Eucharist as communication.

- Liturgy is a communicative happening that is taking place in the very heart of the community through a variety of signs, symbols, art and architecture, music, and gestural language. The Eucharist is the communication par excellence, with the Word of God and Eucharistic sharing as the core communicative elements. This flows into a communication with one another in the community as an important and necessary part of the Eucharistic assembly. Reconciliation, sharing and peace are a precondition to such communion. To view other people as ‘strangers’, because of ethnicity, gender, caste, economic background or other factors, marks a breakdown of communication.

- The Church in Asia, to be a church truly incarnate in Asian cultures (Ecclesia in Asia, no. 24), needs mutual communication between Asian cultural and religious traditions, with the deeper communicative meaning of sharing of meals on the one hand, and the Christian communities on the other. This also facilitates a more effective discovery and living of the communicative power of the Eucharist in building up communion, peace and harmony and thus to communicate the Asian face of Jesus in the Eucharistic community (Ecclesia in Asia, no. 20). Meals, as signs of mutual bond with God and with one another, are significantly present in Asian cultures and invite us to develop this effectively for promoting communication leading to community. The inculturation of the Church in general and of the Eucharist in particular is an indispensable element of our evangelizing mission in Asia. Such inculturation will make the Asian face of Jesus in this continent more alive and present.

The rapid development of new media has a tremendous impact on people and especially the young. The Church is invited to discover new opportunities and ways for communicating the Good News, especially as a Eucharistic community. The Eucharist puts us into an intimate contact with the Good News, which needs to find a prominent place in the new media of a modern world.

Recommendations

- 1) The experience of the Eucharist as communication should break down the barriers of class, caste, gender, social status and lead the Christian community to a transforming power of building communion and caring fellowship. The Eucharist should lead to reconciliation and restoring broken relationships, healing of divisions as essential elements of a Communication spirituality of the Eucharist.
- 2) Eucharist as communication should result in community, sharing, cooperation and self-gift in service. Our world today is characterized by individualism, consumerism, competition and violence. Such a situation should be overcome in the spirit of Eucharistic unity.
- 3) Popular signs and symbols of Asian cultures which are compatible with the Gospel and Christian faith like local art, architecture, language and melodies should be part of the Eucharistic ambience and celebration, so that it will become evident that Jesus does not destroy but fulfill our lives.
- 4) Eucharistic celebrations should educate us for communication to become effective communicators of the story of Jesus, the Good News of God's abiding love in our world. For this, our celebrations should become powerful communicative moments in the life of our communities (cf. Carlo Martini, "Communicating Christ to the World," no. 60).
- 5) We need to integrate a Eucharistic communication spirituality into all pastoral plans and formation programs like biblical, catechetical, liturgical and social initiatives.
- 6) Formators at all levels in the church, especially those in seminaries, are to be sensitized to the communication dimension of the Eucharist, the liturgy and the sending of the Church.
- 7) The experience of the Eucharist should be reflected in our care for migrants, linguistic or cultural minorities, as well as ethnic groups. Pastoral leaders should develop a special spirituality and have a special formation for such a communication approach.

- 8) From our Eucharistic experience, we should take active interest and participate in local festivals and organizing good will gatherings to contribute to peace and harmony among all peoples.
- 9) The Eucharistic experience in the breaking of the bread should also be reflected in our reaching out in compassion with the broken people around us.
- 10) The Eucharist as communication should in a special way reflect the expectations, situations, problems and needs of special groups like youth, children, and the elderly.
- 11) Modern means of communication like Radio, Television and the New Media should be used to bring the Eucharistic celebration also to home-bound people like the sick and the elderly to serve their religious and spiritual needs. (cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 57)

¹ Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Sacramentum Caritatis, (Sacrament of Love)*, 84.

² Ibid.

³ FABC VII, in Fr. Josef Eilers, (Ed). *For all the People of Asia*, Vol. III, 8

⁴ Pope John Paul II, in his letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May, 1982.

⁵ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 78

⁶ Until the establishment of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India – CCBI (Latin Rite), matters concerning the Roman Rite were discussed and approved in the General meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI).

⁷ *General Introduction to the Roman Missal*, 3

⁸ Ireneus: *Adv. Her.*, 5.2.2.

⁹ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 92

¹⁰ *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, by the pontifical Biblical Commission*, p.117