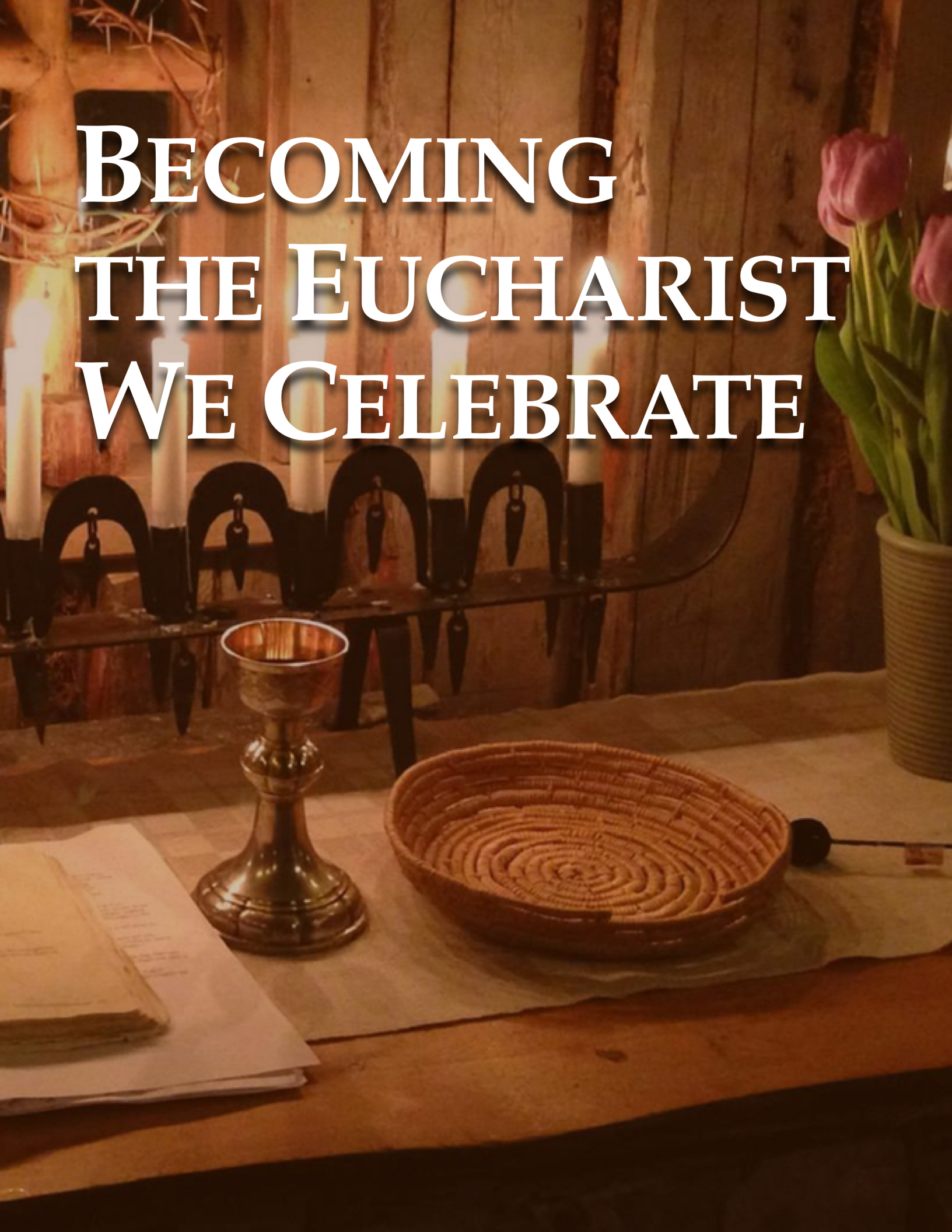


BECOMING THE EUCHARIST WE CELEBRATE



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BECOMING THE EUCHARIST WE CELEBRATE

BY WILLIAM DANIEL

LITURGY IS THE CONFLUENCE of
worlds that have passed through the torcular of Christ, who is the
wine press of God. The church's participation in the action of God in
Christ, if it is to be called liturgy, will resemble this gathering of
humanity into Christ's body, so to return the human to herself,
transfigured into Eucharist, *for the life of the world*.

William Daniel, *Christ the Liturgy*

HOLY EUCHARIST: A BRIEF THEOLOGY

When Jesus gathered the apostles in the Upper Room for his Last Supper with them, he gave thanks for the bread, broke it, and gave it to them saying, “This is my body.” Anglicans have resisted the temptation to finely articulate how Christ is present in the sacrament. Roman Catholics call it *transubstantiation*. The Orthodox call it *transmutation*. Lutherans often refer to it as *consubstantiation*. In brief: *transubstantiation* means that we receive the Body and Blood of Christ,



but the accidents of bread and wine remain. That is, we receive Christ, but the elements still taste like bread and wine. *Transmutation* is the metaphysical transformation of bread and wine such that upon consecration the bread and wine are inseparable from Christ’s mystical Body and presence in the world. Thus, the bread and wine of the Eucharist no longer belong to this world but are become true Body and true Blood.

Consubstantiation means that the bread and wine remain bread and wine; however,

the mystical Body and Blood are conveyed *with them* during Holy Communion. The implication is that the presence of Christ does not remain with the sacrament, which has led this doctrine to be rejected by many Lutherans.

As Anglicans, unwilling to be nailed down, we speak of this mystery as *Real Presence*, without arguing too finely as to *how* this happens, only trusting that it does. This theology of Holy Eucharist is poetically rendered by Queen Elizabeth I,

Twas God the Word that spake it,
He took the Bread and brake it:
And what the Word did make it,
That I believe and take it.

In other words, whatever the apostles received at the Last Supper with Jesus is what we receive, Sunday after Sunday, Eucharist after Eucharist.



It is easy to get lost in the theological jargon around Holy Communion, which is not unimportant, but can, if we are not careful, direct our attention away from the truth and mystery of the sacrament. Holy Eucharist bears witness to the Incarnate reality of God in Christ, who was made human for our sakes, not because God needed to become human, but so that we might become what God is – divine (St. Athanasius). Crucial, however, is recognizing that Holy Eucharist *is* this reality, mysteriously communicated to us in the simplicity of bread and wine. Additionally, bread and wine matter. These staples of human life bear a direct correlation to the sacrificial nature of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 11:26) and the transformation Holy Eucharist effects in us when we attend to the cruciform way of life in Christ.

***“For as often as you eat this bread
and drink the cup, you proclaim the
Lord’s death until he comes”
(1 Corinthians 11:26)***

Anyone who has ever attempted to bake a loaf of bread knows that it can be an arduous affair, even with the modern luxury of having flour readymade, conveniently packaged at the grocery store. Bread making requires patience. It requires kneading, folding, kneading, and more folding. It needs to sit overnight. The yeast and leaven need their own preparation. Yeast needs several days to mature; leaven needs to be cultivated and to be maintained at a certain temperature if it is going to rise appropriately; and bread dough is best baked in ovens that few of us can afford. Before all of this, however, apart from modern conveniences, bread begins in a field. Soil is nurtured. Seeds are planted. The wheat is watered, harvested, beaten and milled, ground together into tiny particles known as flour.



Wine undergoes a similar process. In the first century, no one wandered down to the liquor store to buy a bottle of wine. Sure, people would have made wine to sell, but many, if not most, would have made their own. They would have picked grapes from off the vine, perhaps stomped on them with their feet to extract every ounce of juice, then filtered the juices, which were then placed in wine skins that had been pounded with oil to create a membrane that sealed the wine in the skins. (This process relates directly to the chrism oil of Baptism, as the oil seals the Spirit within.) The wine would have matured over time, and only then fit for drinking. The whole process of baking bread and making wine bears witness to Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. It also reveals that the nature of the Body of Christ

called into being through the sacrament involves death to oneself, so that we might live as one.

“Unless the grain of wheat falling to the ground dies, it remains alone,” says Christ, “but if it dies it bears plenteous fruit” (John 13:24). For a single grain to become part of the bread, it must die. We are the grains that are called to die. The invitation of Christ is the invitation of the cross (Matthew 16:24). Dying to ourselves as grains of wheat and taking up our crosses we are milled together with the whole of the Body, permeated by the leaven of the Spirit, so that in becoming one bread with Christ we might “be of the same mind, having the same love, together in soul, minding one thing,”

“All things come from you, [O God], and of your own have we given you” (1 Chronicles 29:14)

Christ (Philippians 2:2). The crushing of grapes, the grinding of grains, and the mingling together of each by the power of the Holy Spirit, bears witness to the mysterious transformation of the many into one, whereby we receive, as St. Augustine says, the mystery of Christ’s

Body that we are and are called to become (St. Augustine, *Sermon 272*).

Our practice of celebrating and partaking of Holy Eucharist is a visceral reminder and witness that our life is not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19). While churches rarely bake the bread for Holy Eucharist or prepare the wine, these elements remain common to the community, gifts received from the abundance of God (1 Chronicles 29:14), offered with Christ, transformed by Christ, so that we might become Christ so that we might become Eucharist

with Christ. This means that practices that move us away from a common cup or common bread detract from the reality of taking up our crosses, so that we might become who we really are as “one Body in the one Spirit, just as [we] were called in [our] calling’s one hope” (Ephesians 4:4).





It would be pragmatic during this time of physical distancing to alter how we distribute the sacrament, mindful of potential transmission of COVID-19. And while our practices cannot simply remain as they are, we must remember the ancient maxim, *Lex Orandi est Lex Credendi* the law of prayer is the law of belief. That is, how we pray is what we come to believe.

To alter our practices is to alter our beliefs. Form and content are inseparable, and faith is first and foremost a disposition. When Christ calls the disciples he does not begin with expositions of scripture or lofty teachings. He says quite simply, “Come and see” (John 1:39). It is wandering around with Jesus that we learn to move as a people of faith. While this has often been overlooked or neglected in the daily lives of Christians, it is the reality to which our liturgy calls us to attend.

Nevertheless, there is room in our Eucharistic Prayers for cautious attention to be given regarding the transmission of unwanted illnesses, while at the same time highlighting, without compromising, who we are as the gathered Body of Christ. What follows is an discussion of prayer and Eucharist, along with expanded rubrics for celebrating Holy Eucharist, attentive to who we are in Christ, our traditions of faithful liturgical practice, with provisions that exemplify love of neighbor around COVID-19. These may be adapted for each local context. However, deliberate exploration of and attention to the reality of becoming who we are and becoming what we receive in, by and through Holy Eucharist, as well as how we humans perceive this reality through particular, liturgical

movements, is crucial for “all of us to come to the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of God’s Son... that we may grow into [Christ] who is the head, the Anointed, from whom all of the body fitted together and knitted together by every joint provided, according to its operation, in the measure proper to every single part effects the body’s growth, for the sake of building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:13-16).



THE FACULTY OF ATTENTION: THE EUCHARIST AND PRAYER



Simone Weil, 1909-1943

All of life and learning is about developing our faculty of attention, so that we might increasingly direct our attention toward God, which is “the very substance of prayer” (Simone Weil). In other words, life is the materialization of prayer through movements and speech that orient us toward the truth of our humanity, to our true *desire for* and *end in* God.

This is also to suggest that at the center of human nature is prayer. To be human is to be at prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). As Christ is the Liturgy he enacts, likewise is the Incarnate Lord the prayer that he offers to the Father, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). God in the Anointed One, Jesus, does not simply forgive or pronounce forgiveness. Jesus *is* the forgiveness of God. This is what it means for Jesus to be the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

This self-same liturgy and prayer that Christ is, is the image and likeness in which we are created (Genesis 1:26), in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). We encounter this image of prayer and forgiveness and know ourselves in its light to the degree that we attend to God in prayer by our likeness to the love and forgiveness incarnate in Christ.

We have a habit of restricting prayer to words that we utter to God. We do the same with liturgy, relegating it to specified times on a certain day of the week. This is a far cry from the revelation of Christ and the witness of scripture. The revelation of God in Christ, to which the scriptures urge us to attend, is a participation, with every fiber of our being, in the eschatological reality of God with us.



"I think that most believers," writes Simone Weil, "including some who are really persuaded of the opposite, approach the sacraments only as symbols and ceremonies." Weil goes on to say that as we journey toward Christ, this is not to be unexpected. More often than not, we all begin the spiritual life by appropriating the sacraments and the Gospel to ourselves, rather than orienting our lives to the One to whose life they call us. Yet if we stop there, if we

stop with what we get out of prayer, the sacraments or the church, we miss out on the Good News, which is "to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus the Anointed" (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

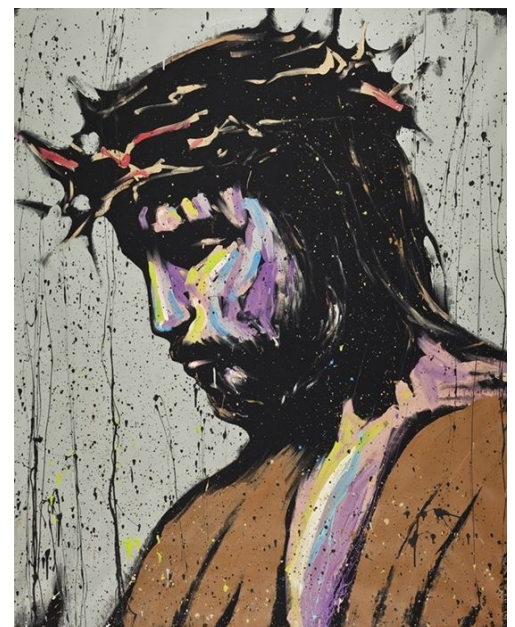
We have for too long treated prayer and the sacraments as unidirectional movements. I say a few words and offer a little money and God blesses me and gives me the grace of the sacraments. Hereby strengthened, I leave church to face whatever the world throws at me during the week. Next Sunday, *Repeat*. This posture toward God inverts the very paradigm of the incarnate action of God in, by and through prayer and the sacraments. The Eucharist, for instance, is not fuel for the week, nor is the church a fill-up station for my spiritual tank. The way we have often been

"We have severed our knowledge of Jesus from the know-how of the cross..."

conditioned to perceive prayer and the sacraments as exchanges between God and individuals, rather than the materializing power of the Incarnation that gives life to the Body of Christ, knit together in the faith of Christ. We have severed our knowledge of Jesus from the know-how of the

cross, causing us to imagine that what we believe in our hearts or think in our minds is separable from what we do with our hands and feet or say with our mouths outside of prayer and worship.

Prayer and Holy Eucharist, however, are not transactions with God. They are movements. They are the movements of God in us, with us and through us, in which God has made us worthy, by grace, to participate. Prayer, for instance, does not originate with us or with the many concerns that we might have. Rather, prayer is an eternal conversation within God. God in Christ has gathered us into this divine conversation, so that we might enjoy the love of God throughout eternity.





Our struggle to “discern the body” (1 Corinthians 11:29) is nothing new. Paul wrestles with the church in Corinth over the disconnect we often find between the Lord’s Table and the tables in our homes. Yet the tables of our homes are to be extension of the Lord’s Table, conveying no less hospitality than is granted us through its eucharistic way.

What is necessary in this age, as it is in every generation, is a renewed understanding of the Body of Christ. We need now more than ever to attend to the reality of human nature as it has been deified in the Savior’s Body (Cabasilas). Only when we begin to recognize that what is natural for humanity is located in its primary relation to the

christological union of human and divine natures in Jesus will we come to know as we are known by the sacramental descending and ascending of God through prayer and Eucharist. Only then we will become who we are, which is what we receive in the mystery of Holy Communion. This entails reimagining what it means to be an agent of Christ as sharing in an agency and action that is not our own.

WHAT SORT OF AGENCY IS THIS? To be an agent of Christ is to be a word of *the* Word to bear Christ to the world and the world to Christ. Mary, the *theotokos* – Godbearer, is exemplary in this regard. And our witness to divine agency is to be no less tangible than giving birth. Our bodies are to be houses of prayer that bespeak the Word of God. Our speaking is to be as one spoken by the Spirit (Matthew 10:19). It is the will and work of God that is to become active in us (Philippians 2:13), for the life alive in us is not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19). It is

“The tables of our homes are to be extensions of the Lord’s Table, conveying no less hospitality...”

Christ’s eucharistic presence that courses through our veins, not simply for our own sake, but for the life of the world (John 6:51-57). As *an* image of *the* Image of God – Christ, humans are by nature, by our being created, bearers of an image and likeness that is not our own (Genesis 1:26).

“The things of Christ, however, are ours more than our very selves. They belong to us because we have become [Christ’s] members... and share flesh and blood and spirit with [Christ]” (Cabasilas). In short, we are bearers of an agency that is not our own, we eat the bread of gods, and we drink “that awesome cup of friendship” (Cabasilas).



HOW DOES THIS AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS? “Amen, amen, I tell you,” says Jesus, “he who welcomes whomever I might send welcomes me, and he who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me” (John 13:20). Matthew records this saying this way: “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who has sent me forth” (Matthew 10:40). Luke records it in the negative: “Whoever rejects you rejects me; and whoever rejects me rejects the one having sent me forth” (Luke 10:16). John Ashton notes that the “high christology” of receiving and rejecting Jesus as receiving and rejecting God is conveyed also to the disciples. Yet John’s Gospel especially relates this to anyone whom Christ may send. For the prayer of Christ is that *all* may be one, just as Jesus and the Father are one, so that the whole world would know the love of God in Christ and share in the life of love that is Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 17:20-26). Therefore, to receive those whom God has called and sent, knowing that God has called and sent *all* people, is to receive Christ; it is to receive the Father who has sent the Son into the world not to pass

“When we turn from Christ in each other, we turn away from our true selves hidden with Christ in God.”



judgment, but that the whole world might be saved through him (John 3:17).

When we turn from Christ in each other, we turn away from our true self hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Recognizing our shared agency in Christ is about knowing who we are in our common nature assimilated to the divine nature in Christ, which is continually renewed in us by our participation in the *breaking of bread and in the prayers*. It is recognizing that human nature the very core of who we are has been

deified in the Resurrected flesh of Jesus Christ, whose mystical Body and Blood we receive, so to become Christ’s ekklesial body for the life of the world. Christ is the gift that he gives (Hebrews 10:10); ours is to receive and thereby become this self-same gift who is our life, that we might be made manifest with him in glory (Colossians 3:4).

As we journey through the eucharistic reality of God with us, we will grow to inhabit the incarnate presence of Christ already at work in us, who materializes in our midst as we come to matter as Christ for and to each other. Becoming Eucharist, therefore, is about becoming responsible to and for the sacrificial love of God in Christ, to be poured out as a libation with Christ (Philippians 2:17), having been buried and raised to new life in the Anointed (Colossians 2:12), so that the image of God we are and share in the eschatological reality of our common nature in Christ will come to govern our perceptions and sensibilities of the world and others in the present moment of our being in the world.

EXPANDED RUBRICS: HOLY EUCHARIST IN A COVID WORLD

Celebrant and Altar Servers

It is best to limit the number of persons involved in preparing and serving at the Eucharistic Table. It is recommended that one of the following be observed:

- Celebrant only
- Celebrant and Deacon
- Celebrant and Altar Server

Sanitizing the Table

The Celebrant and Deacon/Altar Server are expected to take additional measures to ensure that the Sanctuary and Altar Table are free of contaminants. Consider the following measures:

- During Ordinary Time, it is not necessary to have a frontal on the Altar, nor is fair linen necessary. Consider using only a Corporal during celebration.
- It may be best to set the table only with Chalice, Purificator, Paten with Priest's host (smaller hosts, not larger), Pall, Veil and Burse.
 - Only Chalice, Purificator, Paten, Host and Pall are necessary, if simplicity is desired. In the absence of a frontal, however, veil and burse, following the seasonal colors, provide an added dimension to beauty in simplicity.
 - If an altar guild member is setting the table, nothing should be handled without first donning a mask and sanitizing one's hands. This is to be practiced by whomever prepares the elements and utensils for Communion.

"Prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable of toward God. The quality of the attention counts for much in the quality of the prayer." ~Simone Weil

Modeling by Celebrant and Servers

The Faithful are mindful of the movements of clergy and servers, which enables those gathered to be more attentive to their life as a liturgy and prayer with Christ. To this end, consider the following measures both for the physical and spiritual health and well-being of the Faithful:

- Wear masks for the duration of the service, except when receiving.
 - It is fitting, especially during this COVID season, for the celebrant to receive last, rather than the customary reception before others.
- Avoid touching one's face or any unnecessary objects.
- Having washed one's hands before liturgy begins, make time to do so before *The Great Thanksgiving*, as well as just prior to distributing the sacrament. It is also fitting to wash one's hands after clearing the Table prior to the Post-Communion Prayer.
- If the Altar Table is not dressed with frontal and fair linen, it would be appropriate to wipe down the Altar Table, as on Maundy Thursday, as another way to communicate attention to cleanliness. It is not recommended that frontals or fair linens be removed to accommodate this gesture of faith.



Theological NOTE: Receiving before the Faithful is a symbolic gesture that tells the Faithful that the sacrament is “safe” for consumption, as when royalty had tasters for their food to ensure it was not poisonous. The host would take the first bite, an act of hospitality by the guests and a witness by the host that the food is good to eat. Given that this is less of a concern today and all but culturally lost, moving toward the humility of the sacrament where the celebrant takes the role of a servant, receiving after the congregation is both theologically fitting and attentive to our current state.

Chalice, Paten, Ciborium

When celebrating Eucharist with the congregation, it is crucial to avoid any unnecessary touching of the elements or breathing upon them. Consider the following measures:

- The lid on the Ciborium should not be removed during the celebration of Holy Eucharist. We trust that the incarnate presence of Christ in, by and through the sacrament can penetrate the metal of the Ciborium. It should only be unveiled after the celebrant has cleansed her or his hands before distributing the host.
 - If a church does not have a Ciborium, placing a purificator or corporal over the elements is fitting.
- As the celebrant is the only person who is to receive the chalice, there is no need to keep the pall on the chalice the whole time, unless its original use is needed, which was for keeping gnats and flies out of the wine.



Giving and Receiving Communion

As noted above, it is appropriate for the Celebrant to receive after all others have received.

Consider the following measures for giving and receiving Eucharist:

- The Deacon or Server may receive just before the Celebrant, after the Faithful have received.
- An Usher or Designated Server, wearing a mask, may invite persons to come forward to receive Communion, maintaining appropriate distance.
- An Usher or Designated Server, wearing a mask, may stand before the receiving place with hand sanitizer, so that all may receive without fear of transmission to Celebrant or others. Alternatively, a table with hand sanitizer may be placed somewhere convenient for individual use – two tables staggered on either side of the aisle may help with traffic flow.
 - As long as the Celebrant and Faithful have all sanitized their hands before giving and receiving Holy Eucharist there should be no need for the Celebrant to continue washing or sterilizing between recipients.
- When coming to receive Communion, those gathered may remove their masks, observing silence before and after receiving, and putting their masks back on upon returning to their seat.
- Kneeling for Communion is to be avoided, as physical distancing becomes difficult and transmission potential escalates. Standing to receive in a continuous line will be best at this time.

Receiving the Chalice

Even though Communion will be distributed only in one kind (the consecrated bread), the wine is still to be consecrated and the Chalice to be offered to the Faithful. Consider the following:

- After all have received the host, including the Celebrant, the Celebrant should raise the chalice before the Faithful, offering the familiar words, “The Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation,” and then consume the Blood Christ.



Theological NOTE: To receive Holy Eucharist in one kind, whether through bread or wine, is to receive the fullness of Christ, who is present in, by and through the sacrament. Our Eucharistic Liturgy bears witness to the Last Supper with Jesus and the disciples, where Jesus offers his Body and Blood, hidden in bread and wine. For the integrity of our memorial, it is important to celebrate the transformation of the wine into the mystical Blood of Christ, bearing witness to the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ upon being pierced by the soldier’s spear. It is the mixing of the wine and water that conveys this sacrificial reality, even when the chalice is not drunk by the laity. Additionally, this is an appropriate form of reception by desire, where the Faithful, by intent or desire, receive the sacrament for which they are present, without ingesting the Blood of Christ bodily. *(This is the customary practice, often forgotten, anytime someone comes to receive Holy Communion or a blessing. The Chalice bearer is always to offer the sacrament, even to the unbaptized, as their desire, and the desire of the Church, is a form of receiving the grace of Christ’s presence).* Those present will have received the host, and to receive the chalice by desire is a fitting way to participate in the mystery of Christ’s presence in, by and through the wine of Holy Eucharist.

It is important to note that this form of reception is not the same as “virtual communion,” where persons at home watch on a screen with their own bread and wine, receiving when others receive. This practice is not condoned, nor does it bear witness to the gathering of the Body that Holy Eucharist exacts. For those who are unable to attend services, taking Eucharist into the home remains a vital way for the Body to be gathered when separated.

Rehearse, Rehearse, Repeat

Each Sunday that Holy Eucharist is celebrated for the foreseeable future will require rehearsing “how to receive.” Consider the following weekly instructions to aid in distributing Holy Eucharist:

- A fitting way to receive the Eucharist is by making the shape of the cross with one’s hands, using one hand to support the other, with the palm open without fingers in the way.
 - This is at once a reminder that receiving Communion is to receive the fruit of the cross, which, practically speaking, helps to avoid unnecessary contact between the hands of the Celebrant and the Faithful. The Celebrant may gently place the edge of the wafer upon the palm and let it fall upon the recipient’s hand. The recipient’s hands should be flat and low enough for the celebrant to administer the sacrament, without concerns for the host falling to the ground. This should be similarly observed if a broken loaf of bread is used during Holy Eucharist.
 - Reaching out to grab the host with one’s fingers is to be avoided.
 - Parishioners should be reminded to maintain physical distancing measures when coming forward to receive, sanitize their hands, and to remain silent, so as to avoid involuntary transmission.
 - It is customary to respond to the words, “The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven,” with “Amen”; however, the Faithful should refrain from vocalizing this response. Rather, a reverent bow of the head is a silent “Amen,” which is fitting and faithful and should be encouraged.



Additional Consideration

It is an ancient practice, still customary in many churches throughout the world, to celebrate Holy Eucharist facing east, with the people, toward the Rising Sun – our Risen Lord. Due to concerns around the spread of COVID-19, this is an opportunity to embody this collective turning toward Christ in the liturgy.

- If facing east is not customary in your church, some teaching around the appropriateness of this collective disposition, so that the Faithful understand that the Celebrant's back is not to the people, but her or his face, with the people, turned, liturgically, toward Christ. The added benefit of this posture is that the mouth of the Celebrant is turned away from the people, eliminating concerns of "spraying."

Post Communion Prayer

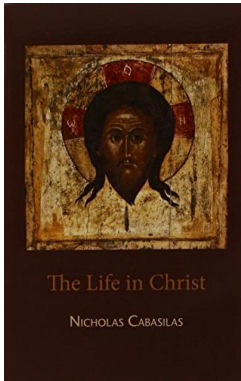
As our services will continue online after we have reconvened in-person worship, deliberately acknowledging before God those who are unable to receive Communion for any reason is to be strongly considered. This can be done at various times during the liturgy; however, below is a Post Communion Prayer for your consideration:

Gracious God, in the fellowship of your faithful people wherever Holy Eucharist is celebrated, and with all your faithful who are unable to receive this day, we join our voices in thanksgiving for the mystery of your presence, not only in bread and wine, but also in us, the temples of our bodies. You have made us not only to receive Eucharist, but to become Eucharist, so that in our bodies, and in the bodies of our neighbors, we would behold your face. Send us out, O Lord, from wherever we stand, to nourish this world with your life-giving presence, so that, inhabited by grace, we might draw the world to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



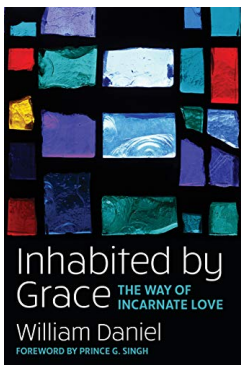
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

DISCUSSION & REFLECTION



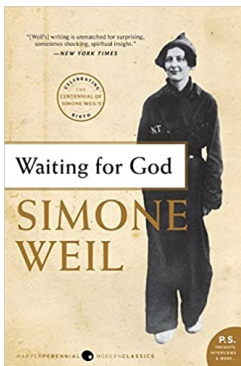
Cabasilas, Nicholas. *The Life in Christ*. Translated by Carmino J. deCatanzaro. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974.

Explores the sacramental nature of life in Christ, unpacking how the mystery of prayer and liturgical action compels worshippers to experience the ordinary through the deifying grace of God in Christ.



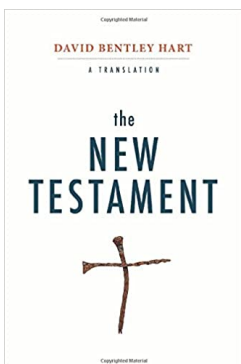
Daniel, William. *Inhabited by Grace: The Way of Incarnate Love*. New York: Church Publishing Inc., 2019.

Offers a way to rethink what we do when we pray; not so much calling on God for help but enjoining ourselves to a conversation—the eternal conversation within the triune God.



Weil, Simone. *Waiting for God*. Translated by Emma Craufurd. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009.

A selection of Letters and Essays that grapple with cultivating the faculty of attention, so that we become oriented to the God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth and thereby receive who we are in the oneness of Christ.



The New Testament. Translated by David Bentley Hart. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

The scriptural references throughout are taken from David Bentley Hart's translation of the New Testament.

*The bread that we break is the
Communion of the Body of Christ*



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