

Reflections on the Eucharist
selected by Christopher Loetscher

The bread is Christ's body, the cup is Christ's blood. If you, therefore, are Christ's body and members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord's table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! Be a member of Christ's body, then, so that your *Amen* may ring true! Be what you see; receive what you are. All who fail to keep the bond of peace after entering this mystery receive not a sacrament that benefits them, but an indictment that condemns them.

St. Augustine

The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brothers and sisters.
Catechism of the Catholic Church #1397

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. *Dorothy Day*

He was my host — he was my guest,
I never to this day
If I invited him could tell,
Or he invited me *Emily Dickinson*

Jesus would reject a relationship in which we merely gazed at him in silent adoration. His own prayer strengthened him for service and ministry, for bringing about the reign of God on earth, and he calls us to follow that lead. Christ's body is not only on the table, but at the table. Christ is to be worshiped, but Christ is also to be received, broken and shared for the salvation of the world. A Christian who is intensely concerned that the consecrated host not be left alone in the chapel must, therefore, also be concerned about the homeless people left alone in the streets. Those who reverence Christ's presence in the host must also reverence

Christ's presence in human bodies. Eucharistic adoration must flow out of and back into the community Eucharist, at which we are sent to bring about the reign of God in the world and to which we return for the strength to carry out this mission. Private prayer and adoration of God is in constant dialogue with the community of love and justice that such prayer intends.

Amy Florian

The invitation of Jesus is to "take and eat," not bow before and adore. A true adoration of Christ present in the Eucharist leads to seeing Christ present in the Living Eucharist of humanity and creation. If adoration before Christ in the Host is an eye-opener to Christ in the poor and homeless, in prostitutes and convicts, then it is a devotion of value. If not, it, like many devotions, borders on idolatry. Those who promote this devotion would be well served to begin their hour of adoration with this prayer by Cardinal Henri de Lubac: "If I lack love and justice, I separate myself completely from you, God, and my adoration is nothing more than idolatry. To believe in you, I must believe in love and justice, and such belief is worth a thousand times more than saying your Name."

Fr. Edward Hays

Do you wish to honor the Body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: "This is my Body" is the same who said: "You saw me hungry and you gave me no food," and "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also for me." What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with gold chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.

St. John Chrysostom

If God incarnated himself in man, died and rose from the dead, all human endeavors deserve attention only to the degree that they depend on this, i.e., acquire meaning thanks to this event. We should think of this by day and by night. Every day, for years, ever stronger and deeper. And most of all about how human history is

holy, and how every deed of ours becomes a part of it, is written down for ever, and nothing is ever lost. Because our kind was so much elevated, priesthood should be our calling, even if we do not wear liturgical garments. We should publicly testify to the divine glory with words, music, dance and every sign.

Czeslaw Milosz

We think of monks as being remote from the world, but St. Benedict, writing in the sixth century, notes that a monastery is “never without guests” and admonishes monks to “receive all guests as Christ.” Monks have not been slow to recognize that such hospitality, while undoubtedly a blessing, can create burdens for them. A story said to originate in a Finnish monastery has an older monk telling a younger one: “I have finally learned to accept people as they are. Whatever they are in the world, a prostitute, a prime minister, it is all the same to me. But sometimes I see a stranger coming up the road and I say, ‘Oh, Jesus Christ, is it you again?’”

Kathleen Norris

What distinguishes Judeo-Christianity in general from other world religions is its emphasis on the value of the individual person, its view of man as a creature in trouble, seeking to get out of it, and accordingly on the move. Add to this anthropology the special marks of the Catholic Church: the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which, whatever else they do, confer the highest significance upon the ordinary things of this world—bread, wine, water, touch, breath, words, talking, listening—and what do you have? You have a man in a predicament and on the move in a real world of real things, a world which is a sacrament and a mystery; a pilgrim whose life is a searching and a finding.

Walker Percy

If they fail to recognize truth as it appears now, needy, naked, and weak, they may not know it until it comes with great power and glory, terrible and indicting, and they may then redden and in vain answer in trembling voices: *When did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to thee?* The Lord shall be known

when he judges, if he is not known when he seeks mercy.

J. F. Powers

Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God.

Oscar Romero

Christ has no body now but yours; no hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on the world; yours are the feet with which he walks to do good; yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

St. Teresa of Avila

The Holy Hour before the Eucharist should lead us to a “holy hour” with the poor, with those who will never be a human success and whose only consolation is Jesus. Our Eucharist is incomplete if it does not make us love and serve the poor. In receiving the communion of the poor, we discover our own poverty.

Teresa of Calcutta

The deepest thing in Christianity is God’s love for earth. That God is rich in his heaven is something known also by other religions. That he wanted to be poor together with his creatures, that in his heaven, he wanted to and did indeed suffer for his world, and that through his Incarnation he enabled himself to prove the suffering of his love to his creatures: this is the hitherto unheard-of thing.

Hans Urs von Balthasar

The after life in the biblical vision is being invited to the table of God. And that means that now you are no longer servants of God, you are friends. The covenant is manifested because we eat together. L’Arche is about sharing the food; it means companionship, company, it means accompanying people. The vision of friendship is eating together. There is a very deep link between food and love; our culture has lost sight of that.

Jean Vanier