

07. Eucharist & Divine Office



I. The Eucharist

In exile on the island of Patmos, on the Lord's day, John had a vision. The Christian communities of Ephesus and the other cities in the Roman province of Asia were gathered for the Eucharist. They were like golden lamp-stands and the risen Christ was present in them dressed as a priest:

Revelation 1:13-16

‘He was clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.’

John saw the churches as the bride of Christ
'adorned for her husband' (Revelation 21:2)

and heard the word of God inviting
'everyone who is thirsty' to 'come' (Revelation 22:17):

'I am making all things new ...

To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the
spring of the water of life' (Revelation 21:6).

All the elements of priestly mediation find special expression in the Eucharist in which the priest is a sacrament of Christ the bridegroom who speaks God's word of love to his bride, invites the assembled community to respond in love, and welcomes it into divine communion.

‘The ministry of ordained priests is directed to the Eucharist and finds its consummation in it. For their ministration, which begins with the announcement of the Gospel, draws its force and power from the sacrifice of Christ and tends to this’ (PO n. 2).

‘It is in the mystery of the Eucharistic sacrifice that priests fulfil their principal function’ (PO n. 13).

‘Pastoral charity flows especially from the Eucharistic sacrifice. This sacrifice is therefore the centre and root of the whole life of the ordained priest, so that the priestly soul strives to make its own what is enacted on the altar of sacrifice’ (PO n. 14).

Those preparing for priesthood 'will be trained to share in the intimate dispositions which the Eucharist fosters: gratitude for heavenly benefits received, because the Eucharist is thanksgiving; an attitude of self-offering, which will impel them to unite the offering of themselves to the Eucharistic offering of Christ; charity nourished by a sacrament which is a sign of unity and sharing; the yearning to contemplate and bow in adoration before Christ, who is really present under the Eucharistic species.'

‘On the level of their own ministry, sharing in the unique office of Christ the mediator, priests announce to all the word of God. However it is in the Eucharistic cult or in the Eucharistic Assembly of the Faithful that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred functions; there, acting in the person of Christ, and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again, and apply until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that, namely, of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father’ (LG, n.28).

The priest is a sacrament of the priesthood of Christ in which all the baptised share:

‘Christ’s faithful should be instructed by God’s word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s body.

They should give thanks to God.

Offering the immaculate victim
not only through the hands of the priest
but also together with him,
they should learn to offer themselves.

Through Christ the mediator
they should be drawn day by day
into ever more perfect union with God and each
other so that finally God may be all in all’ (SC n. 48).

2. The Divine Office

In his Apostolic Constitution on the Book of Psalms (Divino Afflatu, 1911), Pope Pius X quotes from Saint Athanasius (To Marcellus, n. 2 and 12) and Saint Augustine (Confessions, 9.4):

‘Saint Athanasius writes: “The Book of the Psalms is like a garden which contains the fruits of all the other books, grows a crop of song and so adds its own special fruit to the rest ... It seems to me that for the person who recites them the psalms are like a mirror in which we may see ourselves and the movements of your heart and mind and then give voice to them.”

In his Confessions Saint Augustine says: “I wept at the beauty of your hymns and canticles, and was powerfully moved at the sweet sound of your Church’s singing. These sounds flowed into my ears, and the truth streamed into my heart: so that my feeling of devotion overflowed, and the tears ran from my eyes, and I was happy in them.” ... Who is not fired with love by the faithful portrait of Christ the Redeemer whose voice Saint Augustine heard in all the psalms, singing, sorrowing, rejoicing in hope, sighing in distress?’

The General Instruction on the Divine Office (1970)

‘The Fathers of the Church rightly heard in the Psalms Christ calling out to his Father or the Father speaking to his Son. They even recognised in them the voice of the Church, the apostles and the martyrs’ (n.109).

Pope Paul VI: Promulgating the General Instruction

‘Christian prayer is primarily the prayer of the entire community of mankind joined to Christ himself. Each individual has his or her part in this prayer which is common to the one Body, and it thus becomes the voice of the Beloved Spouse of Christ, putting into words the wishes and desires of the whole Christian people and making intercession for the necessities common to all mankind.

‘It obtains its unity from the heart of Christ himself. Our Redeemer, as he himself had entered into life through his prayer and sacrifice, wished that this should not cease throughout the ages in his Mystical Body, the Church, and so the official Prayer of the Church is at the same time the very prayer which Christ himself, together with his Body, addresses to the Father. Thus, when the Divine Office is said, our voices re-echo in Christ and his voice in us’.

Father Marie-Eugène in *I want to see God* page 191:

‘Liturgical prayer, like every other prayer, is to be vivified by interior prayer. If the external movement that it imposes, the art that it cultivates, the sustained attention that it requires, should hinder or even destroy the contemplation that it is meant to serve, the devotion that it should stimulate, or the interior spirit that it wants to express, it would be mere external worship that God could not accept, according to the words of Scripture: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me’[Isaiah 29:13, quoted by Jesus in Mark 7:6].

Father Marie-Eugène (continued)

‘The beginner must learn to pray with the Church, to enter into the majestic beauty of her ceremonies, to penetrate their symbolism and delight in her liturgical texts. We must above all seek in liturgical prayer the movements of the soul of Christ in the Church, listening to the movements of his Spirit of Love, and so learn in the school of Jesus Christ our Master his daily intimate and silent prayer.’

All Christians are invited to pray the Divine Office. A special invitation is extended to priests as sacraments of Christ who is 'able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them' (Hebrews 7:25).

'Look to him, and be radiant ...

Taste and savour how good the Lord is' (Psalm 34:5,8).

'O that today you would listen to his voice!

Do not harden your heart' (Psalm 95:7-8).

'Here I am! ... I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart' (Psalm 40:7-8).



We remember

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We remember how you loved us
to your death,
and still we celebrate,
for you are with us here;

And we believe that we will
see you when you come,

in your glory, Lord,
we remember,
we celebrate,
we believe.



Here, a million wounded souls
are yearning just to touch you
and be healed;

Gather all your people,
and hold them to your heart.



We remember how you loved us
to your death,
and still we celebrate,
for you are with us here;

And we believe that we will
see you when you come,

in your glory, Lord,
we remember,
we celebrate,
we believe.



Now we recreate your love
we bring the bread and wine
to share a meal;

Sign of grace and mercy,
the presence of the Lord.



We remember how you loved us
to your death,
and still we celebrate,
for you are with us here;

And we believe that we will
see you when you come,

in your glory, Lord,
we remember,
we celebrate,
we believe.



Christ, the Father's great Amen
to all the hopes and dreams
of every heart;

Peace beyond all telling,
and freedom from all fear.



We remember how you loved us
to your death,
and still we celebrate,
for you are with us here;

And we believe that we will
see you when you come,

in your glory, Lord,
we remember,
we celebrate,
we believe.



See the face of Christ
revealed in every person
standing by your side;

Gift to one another,
and temples of your love.



We remember how you loved us
to your death,
and still we celebrate,
for you are with us here;

And we believe that we will
see you when you come,

in your glory, Lord,
we remember,
we celebrate,
we believe.