

SOURCE & SUMMIT

A Quarterly Newsletter for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
in the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon



ISSUE SIX - DECEMBER 2019



1

Early Eucharistic Symbolism

On two occasions Christ fed with loaves and fishes, miraculously multiplied, a large concourse of people who had followed Him into the desert. On the first of these occasions, recorded by all four Evangelists, five loaves and two fishes supplied the needs of five thousand people, while on the second occasion, mentioned only by St. Matthew (xv, 32 sq.), seven loaves and a “few” fish more than sufficed for four thousand persons. In accordance with the practice of depicting only those features which were necessary to convey the meaning of a symbol, the Christian artists of the catacombs represented the miraculous multiplication as a banquet, in which the guests are seen partaking of a repast of loaves and fishes.

In frescoes of this category, the source of the artist’s inspiration is clearly indicated by the baskets of fragments on the right and left of the banquet scene. The number of baskets represented is not always historical, this being

regarded as a matter of indifference so far as the symbol was concerned; six Eucharist frescoes each show seven baskets, but in three others the number is two, eight, and twelve, respectively. The number of guests in all symbolical repasts of the Eucharist is invariably seven, a peculiarity which Wilpert (*Fractio Panis*, Freiburg, 1895) regards as due to the early Christian fondness for the symbolism of numbers. According to St. Augustine (Tract. cxxiii, in Joan.), the number seven represented the totality of the Christian world.

The most ancient representations of the Eucharist in the catacombs is the fresco known as the “*Fractio Panis*”, an ornament of the Capella Greca, in the cemetery of St. Priscilla. Wilpert attributes this, with other paintings of that chapel, to the early part of the second century, and his opinion is generally accepted. The scene represents seven persons at table, reclining on a semi-circular divan, and is depicted on the wall above the apse of this little underground chapel, consequently in close proximity to the place where once stood the altar. One of the banqueters is a woman. The place of honor, to the right (*in cornu dextro*), is occupied by the “president of the Brethren” (described about 150-155 by Justin Martyr in his account of Christian worship), i.e. the bishop, or a priest deputed in his place for the occasion (First

Apology 66). The “president”, a venerable, bearded personage is depicted performing the function described in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42-46 and 20:7) as “breaking bread”; hence the name “*Fractio Panis*” appropriately given to the fresco by its discoverer.

It is to be noted that these words are frequently used in the earliest non-inspired Christian literature as a synonym for the Eucharist (for the texts see Wilpert, *Fractio Panis*, Freiburg, 1895).

The moment represented, therefore, is that immediately before the Communion, when the celebrant, then as now, divided the Sacred Host. And, as though to exclude all doubt as to the character of his subject, the artist added a detail found in no other representation of the Eucharist; in front of the celebrant he placed a two-handled cup, evidently the chalice (*calix ministerialis*) of the second century.

Such is the earliest representation in Christian art of the offering of the Mass. A recent writer regards the scene as representing the celebration of the Eucharist in connection with the funeral agape on the anniversary of some person interred in the chapel. The guests partaking of the banquet, in this view, represent the relations of the deceased assisting at an anniversary Mass

(sacrificium pro dormitione) for the repose of his soul (Wieland, *Mensa und Confessio*, p. 139). In addition to these unique details showing a real celebration of the Mass in the early second century, the author of this fresco depicted, side by side with the reality, a symbol of the Eucharist. In the centre of the table are two plates, one containing five loaves, the other two fishes, while on the right and left of the divan seven baskets of bread are distributed symmetrically.

After the “*Fractio Panis*” the most remarkable frescoes in which the miraculous multiplication is employed as a symbol of the Eucharist are two in the crypt of Lucina, the most ancient part of the catacomb of St. Callistus. Each consists of a fish and a basket of bread on a green field. At first view it would seem as though the fishes were represented each carrying a basket of bread, in the act of swimming. A closer examination of the frescoes made by Wilpert, however, has shown that the baskets are placed very close to, but not on, the fishes, and that the supposed blue surface is really green. The subject, therefore, is the miraculous multiplication, the green surface representing a field. As a symbol these pictures are particularly striking from the introduction of two glasses, containing a red substance, into the baskets. Evidently

the artist in this detail had in mind the Eucharistic matter of wine. Consequently, the frescoes as a whole conveyed to an onlooker in the second century a meaning somewhat as follows: the miraculously multiplied bread, together with wine, formed the matter of the Eucharist, which, in turn, by a still greater miracle, became the substance of the Body and Blood of the Divine Ichthys, Jesus Christ.

The various Eucharistic banquet scenes of the catacombs appropriately symbolized the reception of Holy Communion. In one early instance the artist portrayed, besides a representation of this character, a new symbol having special reference to the Consecration. This consists of a scene showing two persons beside a tripod, on which are placed a loaf and fish. One of the figures is clad in the tunic and pallium reserved in early Christian art to persons of sacred character, while the other, at the opposite side of the tripod, stands in the attitude of an *orans*. *Orans* being the posture of the presider with arms extended with the palms of the hands facing forward.



2

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (II)

Sacrosanctum Concilium is the title of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy issued by the Second Vatican Council. It was approved by the assembled bishops by a vote of 2,147 to 4 and promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 4 December 1963. In this series we will look at certain aspects of the document, specially with regard to the Holy Eucharist and the celebration of Holy Mass.

The Instruction itself recalls that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were continuing the work begun by Pope Saint Pius V, who in the promulgation of the Roman Missal wrote that its goal was to give to the liturgy the vigor it had in the tradition of the Fathers. The succeeding Roman Pontiffs directed their energies during the subsequent centuries to ensure that the rites and liturgical books were brought up to date and when necessary clarified for example the outstanding work of Pope Benedict XIV.

The twentieth century opened with the establishment of a special Commission for a general reform of the liturgy by Pope Saint Pius X. Among the areas to which special attention was to be given by this Pontifical Commission were liturgical music, the Calendar, the celebration of

Sunday, the reform of the Roman Breviary and changes in Eucharistic discipline.

The work of Pope Pius IX for the revision of the Vulgate text of the Sacred Scriptures is often overshadowed by the liturgical renewal undertaken by his successor Pope Pius XII. The Encyclical *Mediator Dei* is recognized as the direct precursor of the Constitution on the Liturgy. For the Liturgy of the Hours Pope Pius XII authorized a new version of the Psalter, introduced modifications of the eucharistic fast, introduced the use of vernacular languages in the Roman Ritual and undertook the reform of the Easter Vigil and Holy Week.

During this same period of pre-conciliar liturgical renewal there was a remarkable resurgence of scientific research into patristic and liturgical sources. Without an awareness of the historical background and context of liturgical renewal it is not possible to avoid having an incomplete picture of the development of the life of the Church.

The Liturgy has always undergone modifications throughout the centuries, there is only one unchangeable text and that is the text of sacred Scripture.

The Church has undertaken in every age to cloth the liturgy in words and rites

which speak the ageless mysteries to their different time. Thus in her prayer as in her teaching, the Church fulfills her responsibility as teacher of truth to guard things old, that is, the deposit of tradition; at the same time it fulfills another duty, that of examining and prudently bringing forth things new (see Matthew 13:52).

It is indeed fitting that the work of the revision of the Roman Missal should coincide with the beginning of the new millenium and so that the timeless truths which the Church always seeks to make new for her children can be thrown into ever greater relief in the first years of the twenty-first century.

As Pope John Paul II indicated in *Vicesmus quintus annus* the principles of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy “remain fundamental in the task of leading the faithful to an active celebration of the mysteries” (n. 5). The major part of the liturgical renewal authorized by the Second Vatican council has taken place and notwithstanding the human limitations involved in such a work the immensity of the task which has been accomplished could not have been achieved without the power of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Council is not over, and since a generation has now grown up for whom the Council is an

historical event it is ever more important to remember that although “the greater part of the liturgical books have been published, translated and brought into use, it is still necessary to keep these principles constantly in mind and to build upon them”. (*Vicesmus quintus annus* n.5).

The rites for the celebration of the Eucharist, like the entire post-conciliar liturgical reform, have been inspired and formed by the theological mandates of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the pastoral needs foreseen by the Council Fathers over fifty years ago.

“For the liturgy, through which the work of our redemption is accomplished, most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek. While the liturgy daily builds up

those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.” [SC 2]

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3

Purification of Sacred Vessels

*from the
Archdiocesan
Liturgical Handbook*

1.6I.1 All will remember that once the distribution of Holy Communion during the celebration of Mass has been completed, the prescriptions of the Roman Missal are to be observed, and in particular, whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ must be entirely and immediately consumed by the priest or by another minister, according to the norms, while the consecrated hosts that are left are to be consumed by the priest at the altar or carried to the place for the reservation of the Eucharist.

1.6I.2 The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick and is unable to consume the host.

1.6I.3 The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed after Communion is completed and never be poured into the ground or the sacrarium.

1.6I.4 As for any consecrated hosts that are left, the priest either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist. Upon

returning to the altar, he collects any fragments that may remain.

1.61.5 The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion either at the altar or at a credence table, or for good reason after Mass at a credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator.

1.61.6 Whenever a fragment of the host adheres to his fingers, especially after the fraction or the Communion of the faithful, the priest is to wipe his fingers over the paten or, if necessary, wash them. Likewise, he should also gather any fragments that may have fallen outside the paten .

1.61.7 Then, standing at the altar or at the credence table, he purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice then purifies the chalice, saying quietly, *Quod ore sumpsimus* (What has passed our lips), and dries the chalice with a purificator. If the vessels are purified at the altar, they are carried to the credence table by a minister. Nevertheless, it is also permitted, especially if there are several vessels to be purified, to leave them suitably covered on a corporal, either at the altar or at the credence table, and to

purify them immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.

1.61.8 If such purification by ordinary ministers proves pastorally problematic, consideration should be given to distribution of Holy Communion by intinction or to the distribution of Holy Communion under the form of bread alone.

1.61.9 If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently. If any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the sacrarium in the sacristy.

1.61.10 After Communion the particles of the Body of Christ that remain are to be reserved in the tabernacle. Care should be taken with any fragments remaining on the corporal or in the sacred vessels. The deacon returns to the altar with the priest and collects and consumes any remaining fragments .

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*The High
Priest Aaron*
by
Juanes, Juan
de (Vicente
Juan Masip)
c.1547

Museo del Prado



Three works by artist Juan de Juanes painted (oil on canvas) between 1545 and 1550 clearly convey a Eucharistic meaning. They depict Christ holding up the chalice and the Host flanked by two Old Testament figures: King Melchizedek, bearing bread and wine and the priest Aaron with a jar of incense. The three panels were part of the tabernacle of the high altar in the church of the Birth of the Virgin in Fuente de la Higuera (Valencia), hence the elaborate use of gold in the backgrounds and on the back of the panels, which are polychrome and deploy the sgraffito technique.

Aaron, the first High Priest, was the founder and ancestor of the Israelite priesthood. His mother, Jochebed, the Egyptian-born daughter of Levi, married her nephew Amram son of Kohath, and gave birth to three children: Miriam, the eldest; Aaron; and Moses, the youngest, who was born when Aaron was three years old.

The Bible does not say anything about Aaron's birth, his early life, or his upbringing. It states that he married Elisheba daughter of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah, with whom he had four sons: Nadav, Avihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. His brother-in-law, Nahshon, was a direct ancestor of King David.

Aaron is first mentioned in the Bible when God, angry that Moses was reluctant to

accept the mission to free the Israelites from the Egyptian oppression, told him that Aaron was a good speaker and that he would be Moses' spokesman.

Aaron's eloquent speeches to Pharaoh were reinforced by the miracles that he performed with his walking stick, changing it one time into a serpent and another into blossoms and almonds. Also, by stretching out his walking stick at the request of Moses, he brought on the first three plagues: blood, frogs, and lice; and, in cooperation with Moses, he produced the sixth plague, boils, and the eighth plague, locusts.

It is significant that when he performed his wonders, it was not by virtue of any innate ability or individual initiative but only by divine command, mediated through Moses. The two brothers were already old men—Aaron was 83 years old, and Moses was 80—when Pharaoh finally yielded to their request, and let the Israelites go.

After the march out of Egypt, Aaron was no longer a central figure in the events but only a secondary player at Moses' side. He didn't play any important part in the crossing of the Red Sea, the songs of victory hymns, or the water crisis at Marah. He reappeared later in connection with the incident of the manna.

During the battle that the Israelites fought against the Amalekites, Aaron, together with Hur, supported Moses' hands stretched upward to ensure victory. Later, again with Hur, Aaron acted as deputy for Moses when his brother climbed Mount Sinai to receive the two stone tablets of the Law.

During Moses' prolonged absence on the mountain, Aaron yielded to the pressure of the people and made with their jewelry a golden calf that became a cause of apostasy. Despite his involvement in this incident, he was neither punished nor disqualified from the priesthood. The people, on the other hand, were harshly punished when the Levites, by order of Moses, killed about 3,000 of the idol worshipers.

Although Aaron did not take any part in the construction of the portable sanctuary, he and his sons were appointed priests and consecrated into that office by Moses. During the consecration ceremonies, two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, died when they burned forbidden incense before the Lord, a tragic loss that Aaron bore in silent resignation.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron was allowed to go into the Sacred Sanctuary, the holiest part of the Tent of Testimony, bringing his offering.

The Bible records one incident of friction between the brothers when Aaron sided with their sister, Miriam, against Moses' preeminence, using as a pretext Moses' Cushite wife. God punished Miriam by making her skin leprous, white as snow. She was shut out of the camp for seven days, until her skin healed. Aaron, again, was not punished.

Aaron and Moses were the target of a serious revolt led by their cousin, the Levite Korah, who claimed that all the members of the congregation were equally holy. The earth split open and swallowed Korah and his followers. To demonstrate the special status of the priesthood and the Levites, Moses placed a stick from each of the tribes in the Tent of Testimony and left them there overnight; the following day, the stick representing the tribe of Levi, which had Aaron's name inscribed on it, was the only one sprouting blossoms and almonds.

On one occasion, the people complained that there was no water and that they would die of thirst. God told Moses to take the stick that was in front of the Ark; assemble the community; and, in front of them, speak to a rock. Water would flow from it.

Moses and Aaron assembled the whole community in front of the rock. But this

time, Moses could not control his anger and his frustration with the constantly complaining Israelites. He lost his patience and shouted, “Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock (Numbers 20:10)?” Then, he raised the stick and struck the rock twice with it. Out came a great stream of water, and the people and the animals drank their fill.

God reproved Moses and Aaron, saying, “Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land which I have given them (Numbers 20:12).”

Thus Aaron never lived to see the Promised Land. He died on Mount Hor, near the southern end of the Dead Sea when he was 123 years old. The Israelites mourned him for 30 days, the same number of days that they mourned when, some time later, Moses died. Aaron was succeeded as High Priest by his son Eleazar.

Aaron, first High Priest of the Old Law, is most naturally a figure of Jesus Christ, first and sole Sovereign Priest of the New Dispensation. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was the first to set off the features of this parallel, indicating especially two points of comparison. First, the calling of both High Priests: “Neither

doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God as Aaron was. So Christ also did not glorify himself, that he might be made a high priest, but he that said unto him: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Hebrews 5:4-5). In the second place, the efficacy and duration of both the one and the other priesthood. Aaron’s priesthood is from this viewpoint inferior to that of Jesus Christ. If indeed, the former had been able to perfect men and communicate to them the justice that pleases God, another would have been useless. Hence its inefficacy called for a new one, and Jesus’ priesthood has forever taken the place of that of Aaron (Hebrews 7:11-12).

Juan de Juanes was one of the most important painters of the Spanish Renaissance. He dominated Valencian circles in the mid 16th century, although there is still some discussion as to whether certain works were painted by him or by his father, Juan Vicente Masip, who was already active in 1493 and was unquestionably one of the great Valencian painters of the early sixteenth century.

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Mysterium Fidei



On September 3, 1965, Pope Paul VI published the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* on the doctrine and worship of the Holy Eucharist. It was an unprecedented document, issued during the Second Vatican Council. It was also an urgent document because it provided the necessary doctrinal foundation for the Council's historic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

With prophetic insight, Paul VI foresaw that, if the desired liturgical renewal is to remain Catholic, it must be grounded on the Church's historic faith in the Real Presence.

When *Mysterium Fidei* was first published, surprisingly during the Vatican Council, many wondered why the Pope seemed to be so preoccupied with preserving the Church's faith in Christ's Eucharistic Presence. That is why he went through a series of reflections, each building on the preceding, to show that unless we believe in the physical presence of Christ, effected by the priest at Mass, we not

only do not have a truly Catholic liturgical reform. We no longer have the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Pope Paul began with what he termed the “mystery of faith” in the Real Presence, as a “defense against the poison of any form of rationalism.” He stressed the fact that this is a revealed mystery which must be approached “above all with humble obedience, not relying on human considerations.” Our reason alone cannot comprehend how “the true body of Christ and His true blood are in this sacrament.” Then he quotes Cyril who tells the faithful, “Do not entertain doubts on the truth of this; rather take the Savior’s words with faith, for since He is the truth, He does not lie” (Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas, Homily on Matthew, 82).

One after another of the Church’s great teachers are cited by Paul VI to show that faith in the real, corporeal presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament belongs to the historic treasure of Catholic teaching. St. Augustine affirms that “what since the days of antiquity was preached and believed throughout the whole Church with true Catholic faith is true, even if it is proved by no argument, explained by no words.” (*Contra Julianum*, 6,5,11)

St. Bonaventure declares, “There is no difficulty about Christ’s presence in the Eucharist as in a sign. But that He is truly present in the Eucharist as He is in heaven, this is most difficult. Therefore to believe it is especially meritorious.” (In IV *Sententiarum*, 10,1,1).

Not only has the true Church always believed in the Real Presence, but she has defined her faith in precise words. Admitting such a thing as legitimate development of doctrine; even the Church’s authoritative modification of language, yet the meaning of the doctrine of the Real Presence remains unchanged. “That meaning,” the Pope quotes from Vatican I, “which Holy Mother Church has once defined must forever be retained and we may never depart from that meaning under the pretext and name of a more profound learning” (On the Catholic Faith, 4).

Mysterium Fidei is a remarkable document which is worth the time of anyone interested in the Church’s teaching regarding the Holy Eucharist.

Read the full encyclical [HERE](#).

