

Eucharistic Celebration: Converging Theology - Divergent Practice

United Methodist/Roman Catholic Dialogue

December, 1981

Part 1: Converging toward the Unity God Wills

"Because there is one loaf," wrote the Apostle Paul "we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf." (1 Corinthians 10:17) The symbol of one bread designates not only the unity of the sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion), but also beyond that the unity of the whole church. This includes, among many others, all Roman Catholics and United Methodists.

To be divided is sinful. But by using our human will and intelligence, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can keep removing barriers to eucharistic unity. We honor one another's faith and conscience. We respect one another's doctrine insofar as we understand it to be faithful to the one Spirit. In seeking to manifest unity, we also learn to appreciate the beauty, holiness and spiritual power of the Eucharist in the whole range of human experience.

Within the context of many national and international ecumenical dialogues, the United Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church have been in conversation in the United States since 1966 through officially appointed representatives.¹ The first formal harvest of this common enterprise was *Holiness and Spirituality of the Ordained Ministry*, 1976.²

Encouraged by the level of agreement attained during the first phases, a new team was asked to study the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist as it is now widely called. This was hardly a pioneering venture. Earlier ecumenical studies in liturgy had established a precedent for theological agreement on a number of aspects of this sacrament. In particular, the official international dialogues between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church on this subject had reached substantial accord in the reports given at sessions of the World Methodist Council at Denver (1971) and Dublin (1976). Also, the maturing studies of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, involving almost all the churches over several decades, proved to be stimulating in our probe of questions and issues not covered previously in these discussions. Now we are pleased to offer this report to our two communions and to the ecumenical community at large.

We feel a profound gratitude for the ecumenical dialogues generated by the Second Vatican Council, for the gracious opportunity to inquire after the deeper sources of our unity, for the honest meeting of representative voices from our respective traditions, and for the fruit of common ecumenical experience and research among Roman Catholics and United Methodists during the past two decades. While this statement cannot be regarded as official teaching for either Roman Catholics or United Methodists, it expresses new levels of insight born of extensive dialogue concerning the theology and practice of the Eucharist in our churches.

During the course of our work we have shared the word of God, prayed and sung together in common non-eucharistic worship, and have come to know and appreciate one another as pastors, theologians and liturgical leaders in our churches. Mutual respect and love born of discovery of

new dimensions in each other's traditions have grown as we have explored points of surprising convergence as well as remaining differences in teaching and practice concerning the Eucharist. Painful awareness of our separation and growing joyful recognition of common ground beyond the language of the renewed texts of our eucharistic rites mark our progress and characterize our point of view.

One of the distinctive features of this dialogue involved the study, comparison and contrast of the most recent liturgical reforms generated within our traditions. The revised Roman Catholic Sacramentary and Lectionary were explored. Also, some of the most recent United Methodist texts were shared: *Word and Table*; the 1980 edition of the text of the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*; further elaborations of the lectionary resources as found in *Seasons of the Gospel* (1979) and *From Ashes to Fire* (1979); and *At the Lord's Table* (1981)-a cycle of seasonal eucharistic prayers for official use through the entire year-all parts of the new worship and teaching resources.

After studying our historical development, we analyzed and compared actual texts and current shifts in practice and theology in both traditions. In keeping with post-Vatican Council development, we examined key concepts such as "memorial," "sacrifice" and "presence." Our study of the interrelatedness of word and sign-actions of the community gave definition to our inquiry. We gave full attention to the two churches' sacramental teaching, noting the lack of magisterial authority for regulating the details of doctrine and practice of the Eucharist in Methodism. We described how we actually celebrate the sacrament, noting varieties of practice, and discussed shifts in theology implicit (and explicit) in the prayer texts we are currently using, and how these contrast with earlier usages. The findings of our dialogue and these reflections upon them attempt to present a comprehensive view which, we hope, will set a future agenda in light of the convergence in theology and practice expressed in the next two sections of this report.

The Dublin Report reminds us that "Roman Catholics and Methodists approach the Eucharist without a history of explicit disagreement. Our traditions have indeed developed in separation from each other but not in direct historical conflict." (Par. 48). Yet we have been able to discern that other disagreements lie beyond our mutual understanding of the elements of eucharistic theology. In the concluding section of this report we cite work to be done on questions concerning the nature both of the church and of ministry in relation to our quest for eucharistic unity.

We are in a period of historical development even during the writing of this report. Since Roman Catholics and United Methodists are fully involved in the reform and renewal of eucharistic rites, in both churches issues of sacramental theology are now being reexamined in the context of living celebration of the gathered people of God. Therefore it is appropriate that issues of church authority and ministry also be illumined by continued exploration of authentic proclamation of God's word and the communal celebration of the "mystery of faith." Proper and adequate understanding of true celebration of the Eucharist will shed light on doctrines about ministry and authority, and would alter the procedure of simply applying antecedent understanding of ministry and authority to issues in sacramental theology. The same procedure applies to such questions as intercommunion and the unity in faith which permits of plural rites and traditions.

Yves M.-J. Congar, writing on the phrase "post-ecumenism" in *Concilium* (Vol. 54, 1970), cites two decisive experiences which we have begun to live through together as Christians in the mid-twentieth century:

1. the experience of returning to the sources, especially the Bible, leaving aside all strictly confessional positions (though without thereby rejecting them); (2) the experience of the fact that the same questions which the world is asking today through its tragic tensions and its secularism face us all, and that since we all have the *same* origin, we are led to give the same answers and adopt the same commitments. (page 17)

Our dialogue acknowledges this insight of Congar, and has struggled with the significance of these experiences. It is both disturbing and promising to become aware that in respect to biblical, theological and liturgical matters we may share more in common with our dialogue partners than we do with many persons within our own communions. This raises acute questions about being in accord with authority within one's tradition. We have been forced to mark the differences at places other than those we first expected. Thus, difficult questions are asked about the nature of unity of belief and practice within each of our respective traditions. We are reminded that matters of unity—more specifically of eucharistic faith and practice—are never simply theological or simply liturgical. They are political and historical as well.

Heartened by the deepened level of constructive discussion, we search for a common language which will allow us to recognize true and efficacious elements in each other's tradition of teaching and celebration. Out of our study and appropriation of the living prayer of the renewed eucharistic liturgies, this common language is emerging.

Part II: Structure of the Eucharistic Celebration

Remarkable unity and agreement on the structure of the eucharistic celebration and on the central eucharistic prayer have been discovered in our dialogue. This is in large measure a result of the background of shared scholarship in the areas of biblical studies, liturgical history, and theology which contributed to the restored texts. The broader liturgical reforms, including the modes of celebrating eucharistic rites, also reflect these shared understandings.

First, we declare our mutual recognition of the underlying unity of the whole eucharistic service: both the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the table (in Roman Catholic usage, "of the Eucharist"). Vatican II gave Roman Catholics a new awareness of this important truth: "The two parts which, in a certain sense, go to make up the Mass, namely, the liturgy of the word and the eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected with each other that they form but a single act of worship." (*Constitution on the Liturgy*, 56) This awareness helps Roman Catholics avoid an imbalance which has often been struck between word and sacrament. The Eucharist is not indifferent to the word, but is seen as the thanksgiving precisely for the things portrayed as God's wondrous gifts in the word proclaimed and sung. Analogously, in *Word and Table* United Methodists, who have traditionally stressed the importance of the word, often to the neglect of the eucharistic celebration, have returned to a more balanced understanding of the structure of the Sunday worship service. The new orders of service (Alternate Text, 1972, rev. 1980) manifest this very structure.

Secondly, we recognize that the sixteenth century liturgical reformers, both Catholic and Protestant, had insufficient knowledge of the earliest prayers of praise and thanksgiving which were the Christian sequel to Jewish liturgical practice. Rather than simply repeating the Protestant polemic and its Counter-Reformation counterpoint, eucharistic dialogue among us returns to common roots, especially in the pattern and content in biblical and patristic sources. Early Christian practice of the Eucharist has been described as having a fourfold action:

1. bread and wine are taken and the table prepared;
2. the presiding minister gives thanks to God over bread and
3. the bread is broken;
4. the bread and wine are distributed and consumed.

Dom Gregory Dix says: "In that form and in that order these four actions constituted the absolutely invariable nucleus of every eucharistic rite known to us throughout antiquity from the Euphrates to Gaul." (*The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 48) This fourfold action has its origins in Jesus' own actions at table with his disciples. Both churches understand this shape of the liturgy as his command to "do this in memory of me," which is reflected in our eucharistic practices.

Having accepted this common background, we discussed the elements essential to Christian eucharistic prayer. We found structural agreement in comparing: Paragraph 55 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and chapter four, "The Great Thanksgiving: Its Essential Elements," in *Word and Table*, pp. 44-46. These elements are schematized as follows:

GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL (par. 55)

The chief elements of the eucharistic prayer are these:

- a. Thanksgiving (expressed especially in the preface): in the name of the entire people of God, the priest praises the Father and gives him thanks for the work of salvation or for some special aspect of it in keeping with the day, feast, or season.
- b. Acclamation: united with the angels, the congregation sings or recites the Sanctus. This acclamation forms part of the eucharistic prayer, and all the people join with the priest in singing or reciting it.
- c. Epiclesis: in special invocations the Church calls on God's power and asks that the gifts offered by men may be consecrated, that is, become the body and blood of Christ and that the victim may become a source of salvation for those who are to share in communion.
- d. Narrative of the institution and consecration: in the words and actions of Christ, the sacrifice he instituted at the Last Supper is celebrated, when under the appearances of bread and wine he offered his body and blood, gave them to his Apostles to eat and drink, and commanded them to carry on this mystery.
- e. Anamnesis: in fulfillment of the command received from Christ through the Apostles, the Church keeps his memorial by recalling especially his passion, resurrection, and ascension.
- f. Offering: in this memorial, the Church-and in particular the Church here and now assembled-offers the victim to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Church's intention is that the faithful not only offer the spotless victim but also learn to offer themselves and daily

to be drawn into ever more perfect union, through Christ the Mediator, with the Father and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all.

- g. Intercessions: the intercessions make it clear that the eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole church of heaven and earth, and that the offering is made for the Church and all its members, living and dead, who are called to share in the salvation and redemption acquired by the body and blood of Christ.
- h. Final doxology: the praise of God is expressed in the doxology which is confirmed and concluded by the acclamation of the people.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING: ITS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

(From *At The Lord's Table*, The Methodist Publishing House, 1981)

The Great Thanksgiving is a hymn of praise and a creed as much as it is a prayer. It is trinitarian, though it is addressed throughout to the first Person of the Trinity. It begins in thanksgiving to God the Father, narrates the work of God the Christ, and invokes the Father to send God the Holy Spirit for our benefit. The concluding doxology, though addressed to God the Father, ties together the trinitarian nature of the whole prayer.

The Great Thanksgiving opens with (1) a *dialogue* of greeting between the presiding minister and people and invites them to join in the giving of thanks, just as we might introduce grace before an ordinary meal.

Then comes (2) a joyful thanksgiving called the *preface*, which usually recites either a specific work of Christ (varying according to season or occasion) or a general narration of salvation history.

This thankful recalling of God's mighty acts is punctuated by (3) a *congregational acclamation* of praise: "Holy, holy, holy" (Sanctus) from Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8 and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (*Benedictus qui venit*) from Psalm 118:26 and Matthew 21:9. In some Christian tradition, God's mighty acts under the old covenant are recited before this acclamation, and the new covenant follows. In other traditions, this acclamation comes either at the beginning or at the end of the whole recitation.

This is followed and culminated by (4) the *words of institution*-the commemoration of the events in which Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Some traditions locate the words of institution at their chronological place in the recitation of salvation history, but in any event these words are not neglected.

Some recent liturgies employ another *congregational acclamation* after the words of institution, such as "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

Then occurs (5) the remembering (*anamnesis*) before God of what Jesus has done as we offer this memorial of his sacrifice (*oblation*). Usually this segment of the prayer refers concisely to Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, offering these before God for our benefit.

Next comes (6) an invocation (*epiclesis*) in which God is asked to send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts and on the assembled congregation. Benefits desired from communion are prayed for. Intercessions for the living and dead have sometimes occurred at this point.

Triumphantly and joyfully all concludes with (7) a Trinitarian *doxology* and *amen*. The doxology sums up in praise the trinitarian theme of the whole prayer.

Frequently (8) *the Lord's Prayer* follows as a congregational act in which we address with familiar confidence the God who has done all these wonderful things simply as "Our Father."

(Adapted from the chapter of the same title written by James F. White in *Word and Table* [1st ed. only], Abingdon, 1976.)

Part III: Theological Understanding Emerging from the Structure

Recognizing the convergent understandings of the inner structure of the eucharistic prayer, we affirm the possibility of more substantial theological agreement concerning the nature of the eucharistic action. At the same time, the understanding of the structural parts of the eucharistic celebration is not always the same in the two churches, especially when considered on the level of popular piety and liturgical practice. Following the lead of the Dublin Report, we divide our consideration into the questions of the presence of Christ and of the sacrifice of Christ, to which we add that of faith and Eucharist.

Presence of Christ

In modern times the concept of the presence of Christ has been reevaluated. The whole question of eucharistic presence in the elements has been placed in the broader context of Christ being present through his Spirit in the gathered people, in prayer, song and in the reading and proclaiming of the word.³ The Denver Report to the World Methodist Conference raises the question of the contrast often made between Christ's presence in the Eucharist and his presence in other means of grace. This contrast, however, is somewhat misleading. "While there are different emphases, we both affirm that wherever Christ is present he is present in his fullness." (Par. 56)

This statement is understood differently in the two churches. We understand that the popular piety of the two churches views the presence of Christ from differing perspectives. Most Roman Catholics emphasize the presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements. Most United Methodists emphasize the presence of Christ in the proclaimed word enlivened by the Holy Spirit. An agreed-upon position concerning presence, then, realistically will have to allow for varying preferences at the level of popular piety and for specific theological accents on the part of the two churches. We affirm that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist must be understood as manifold, as indicated above. There is a pluralism of belief within the Methodist tradition which is not anchored in a tradition of explicit theological formulation. Belief in real presence is, however, powerfully expressed in the eucharistic hymns of John and Charles Wesley. There is little doubt that a claim to real presence is consistent with John Wesley's belief and is expressed in the new United Methodist texts. The Holy Spirit is implored to "help us know, in the breaking

of this bread and the drinking of this wine, the presence of Christ who gave his body and blood for all." Thus, increasingly many United Methodists understand the elements to have a determinative relation to how Christ is present distinctively in the eucharist. For their part, Roman Catholics have begun to see that the doctrine of transubstantiation is itself an historically conditioned theological formulation that seeks to avoid misunderstanding about Christ's eucharistic presence.

Sacrifice of Christ

The area of sacrifice presents even more complexity. The Dublin Report acknowledged: "The term sacrifice is not used so readily by Methodists as by Roman Catholics when speaking of the eucharist." (Par. 64) Also quoting the Denver Report and the Anglican-Roman Catholic Windsor Statement (1971), the Dublin Report stated:

We are one in affirming that "The eucharist is the celebration of Christ's full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, once and for all, for the whole world." It is a memorial (anamnesis). It is not a mere calling to mind of a past historical event or of its significance, but the church's effectual proclamation of God's mighty acts. Some would wish to link this dynamic view not with "a reenactment of Christ's triumphant sacrifice," but with Christ's being present and bringing with him all the benefits of his once-for-all sacrifice for us. (Par. 63)

Our conversations brought out the fact that many United Methodists mean by "sacrifice" the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross, while many Roman Catholics think primarily of the sacrifice that the church has offered down through the centuries, which is that one sacrifice. Both sides are being aided now by recent biblical and historical studies which discuss the early church's understanding of sacrifice in both its cultic and ethical dimensions.

By interpreting "sacrifice" in terms of memorial, both traditions affirm the once-for-all-ness of Christ's self-offering on the cross. Both affirm that the benefits of his passion and death are present to the faithful now. Nevertheless this explanation by itself bypasses certain other important issues. The role played by the church in the offering of this sacrifice remains a problem. The answer to the question "Who offers what?" is far from clear. United Methodists are not comfortable with such terminology of Vatican II as the Eucharist's "perpetuating the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries." (*Constitution on the Liturgy*, no. 47)

A related problem concerns the frequency of celebration. Does not a radical diversity of practice between United Methodists and Roman Catholics express real differences in theological understanding? One church stresses the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice, the other the need for the church to make the fruits of the sacrifice of Christ its own. Infrequency of celebrating the Eucharist-quarterly or even less among some United Methodists-indicates the idea that Eucharist is an occasional act of worship which the church does, whereas frequency of celebration-as practiced by Roman Catholics-indicates that the Eucharist constitutes the church, determining what the church is.

A way forward is found in the inner connection between Christ's sacrifice and our continuing self-offering. The new United Methodist text makes this explicit: As we remember and

"experience anew" the reality of Jesus Christ in the sacramental sign-action we pray that God will accept "this, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which we offer in union with Christ's offering for us, a living and holy surrender of ourselves." This is characteristically Wesleyan; but it is also clearly expressed in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, par. 48. Our offering is always in union with Christ's offering. We both understand that as Christ offers himself, so our response in the communal enactment of his memorial (*anamnesis*) is itself sacrificial in character. It is sacrificial in the senses of both Christian worship and behavior. Only through Christ's sacrificial offering in his full life, passion and death and resurrection is the church able to offer any sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Both Roman Catholic and United Methodist understanding stresses that the church's offering of Christ's sacrifice does not repeat the death, but rather proclaims and shows forth the redemptive mystery of Christ's self-giving for us.

The worship character of eucharistic sacrifice, expressed by traditional Roman Catholic teaching, is thus joined more clearly to the United Methodist accent on ethical sacrifice—the self-surrender to God in service of neighbor. Both accents are necessary for a deeper understanding of Christ's continuing, active and redeeming presence, his intercession for the world. This belief is acknowledged and enacted by the church's eucharistic celebrations.

The two churches do not have doctrinal agreement about the specific sense in which the offering of the church is the full offering of Christ. Yet it is clear for both churches that the Holy Spirit in the gathered community makes real what Christ has gained for us (as "all benefits of his passion"). This understanding is the basis for exploring the relationship between ecclesiology and the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice. For both word and sacrament are made efficacious, are "realized," as Wesley said, by the action of God the Holy Spirit.

Faith and the Eucharist

We acknowledge in both traditions the centrality of faith in the celebration of the Eucharist. We affirm that Christ is present to the church, in both word and Eucharist, independently of the faith of individuals. We assert both the primacy of God's act in Christ, and the continuing activity of the Holy Spirit in animating and realizing the saving work of God in Christ. The offering of grace in the Eucharist is God's free gift. Yet, faith is necessary for a life-giving encounter. In the language of the 1971 Anglican-Roman Catholic Windsor Statement, "When this offering is met by faith, a life-giving encounter results." (Par. 8)

Roman Catholic teaching avoids the "receptionist doctrine" that sacramental reality is a matter of personal faith-experience only. United Methodists, in devotional piety, emphasize experience, especially the need to experience the presence of Christ. However, the language of their new texts makes clear that faith is located both in the church as community by the operation of the Holy Spirit and in the hearts of the believers. For United Methodists, faith is not located solely in the individual believer's response. It is the faith of the church which is the ongoing context of "the word rightly preached and the sacraments duly celebrated."

United Methodists welcome the new and strong stress by Roman Catholics on "full and active participation" in the liturgy. Attentive and active faith on the part of believers has been the hallmark of Wesleyan evangelicalism, stressing worship "in spirit and truth." At the same time,

Roman Catholics welcome the new United Methodist theological accent on the Eucharist as a corporate offering of the whole church. Both communions are correcting the long-prevailing imbalance between word and sacrament. Indeed we both acknowledge their mutual interdependence.

Our understanding of what constitutes eucharistic devotion and practice differs. Yet there is clear convergence between Roman Catholics and United Methodists in understanding how grace, God's offer of salvation in preaching and the Eucharist, both activates and elicits a faith response.

If our common theological consensus expressed in these pages were fully reflected in the practice of piety and common worship we would be far closer to the deeper unity we seek, the unresolved questions concerning authority and ministry notwithstanding. We must live with the gaps between theological and liturgical convergence, and the differences of practice in our traditions. We are both in the process of change and development in practice. For both churches there is still some ambiguity in the understanding of "being in accord with the faith and practice of the church." This is especially unclear for the United Methodist Church which does not have the authoritative structure for teaching uniform doctrine of eucharistic faith and practice in local churches. Because Methodism is a non-confessional tradition, any definitive understanding by the people is precluded, at least at the level of explicit doctrinal assent. The disciplinary understandings of Methodism do not require unanimity in the mode of celebration by the clergy. The Roman Catholic is currently engaged in a profound recatechesis of the laity.

Thus while historical expressions of doctrinal differences regarding the Eucharist have separated us, we are both appealing to the practice of liturgical reform and renewed formation of the faithful based in large measure upon common biblical and patristic principles of reform. Such common grounding in the re-education of clergy and laity, when it issues in a more vivid and mature celebrating community, in itself marks a more deeply shared theological agreement in faith. At the heart of reform and renewal is a dynamic conception of the eucharistic mystery which cannot be confined to debates over real presence in the elements. Indeed, our reformed rites both express the fullness of Christ's offering and the whole sweep of the life, death, resurrection and coming in glory of the Christ more adequately than in previous eucharistic texts.

Part IV: Work Begun and Unfinished: Questions toward the Future

Our mutual exploration of Roman Catholic and United Methodist eucharistic practice and theology has suggested a continuing agenda that is at once challenging and promising. The agenda contains two kinds of considerations. The first concerns additional shared theological themes which we now recognize as crucial but which need more thorough investigation; the second concerns certain fundamental questions which we did not explore. The theological themes are: Eucharist and eschatology; worship and ethics, the mission of the church and our evangelical witness; Eucharist and the Holy Spirit. The questions yet to be pursued are those of church order, authority and ministry, on which our differences are considerable.

Theological Themes

1. Both traditions have begun to rediscover and to articulate the eschatological and ethical implications of the Eucharist rightly celebrated and understood by the people. The recovery of Eucharist as a resurrection meal and foretaste of the messianic banquet manifests a central meaning of the sacrament. We rejoice in this development, and call for further study of its significance for mutual understanding. We have much yet to discover in theology and spirituality from this perception of solidarity with all God's people on earth and in heaven in expectancy of the unambiguous Reign of God. Such an understanding cannot be confined to certain Sundays of the year, but should permeate fundamental understanding of what it means to be eucharistic people formed by God's word and enlivened by God's Spirit.

We recognize and affirm that both churches are beginning to reinterpret and teach the Eucharist as an eschatological meal, in addition to its meaning as memorial and sacrifice. Every act of the worshipping community around pulpit and altar, in remembering the death and resurrection of Christ, is always oriented toward our future, and that of the whole creation, with God. Such an eschatological emphasis is signified in the people's acclamations and at other points in the new. We profess together that participation in the saving power of Christ's body and blood involves living for the coming Kingdom which has already broken into our history.

Our common recognition of the eschatological character of all Christian prayer enables both Roman Catholics and United Methodists to know why the Kingdom of God and the church can never be fully identified. Nevertheless, by virtue of the saving activity of God manifest through the church's faithful proclamation and celebration of the Gospel sacraments, as well as its faithful evangelical witness in service to all the world in Christ's name, the church is forever ordered toward the Kingdom of God.

2. Another crucial theme emerging in our discussion concerns the necessary link between the Eucharist and ethics, namely our life of service as Christ's Body in the world. The Wesleys and early Methodism understood an intrinsic connection between receiving the sacramental means of grace and doing good works which flow from faith in Christ. This insight has been recently regained by United Methodists, and is given explicit expression liturgically in the post-communion prayers, as found in the 1980 United Methodist order "You have given yourself for us, Lord. Now we give ourselves for others.... Help us to glorify you in all things." Similarly, recent Roman Catholic theological commentary on the Eucharist has stressed the inner relation between bread of the eucharistic table and "bread for the world." In both cases we anticipate a deepening understanding of this connection between our "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" and our ethical responsibilities and mission as God's people in a suffering and hungry world.

We welcome renewed interest in the experience and doctrine of the Holy Spirit, especially in relation to the sanctification of human life and its liberation from many kinds of bondage. Roman Catholics and United Methodists alike have long emphasized growth in grace and the centrality of the life of personal holiness.⁴ The distinctive Wesleyan stress on exercising the means of grace in the Eucharist, in prayer to the Roman Catholic emphasis and in scriptural holiness is similar upon authentic liturgical

spirituality. With the recovery of the more primitive shape of the liturgy and the new understanding and practice of active participation in the prayer of the church, both churches find themselves sharing common resources—liturgical and devotional—which reveal new dimensions of Eucharist and sanctification.

Our recovered appreciation of the Holy Spirit in the eucharistic celebration signals a growing area of common understanding about the work of the Spirit in the church and in the world. Both traditions have made explicit the prayers for work of the Spirit in word and eucharistic presence. The centrality of the prayer invoking the Spirit (*epiclesis*) is the most striking case in point. United Methodists have contributed to full, active participation in the Eucharist by witnessing to the Spirit's work in gathering the fellowship, in vital preaching, in spontaneous prayer, and in congregational song. Roman Catholics have steadfastly witnessed to the presence and work of the Spirit who enables the church to make the sacrifice of Christ her own. Both are now discovering that the manifold presence of Christ is made real by the Holy Spirit, in the faith and teaching of the church as well as in the enkindled piety of the people in lives of discipline, obedience and love. Out of the riches of these resources in our traditions, it remains for us to explore the interrelation of the Spirit and ecclesial life and order.

We acknowledge that differences in our respective conceptions of the church and its authority in matters of faith and doctrine bear directly upon our theological differences concerning the nature and meaning of sacramental discipline and participation. In our dialogue we have discerned that ecclesiological differences, while real, need not govern what can be learned from the deepest and most faithful aspects of each other's recovery of Eucharist in its fullness.

Questions to be Pursued

These recently discovered aspects of agreement concerning the Eucharist have made all the more imperative the need to state unresolved questions which need further exploration in future dialogues between Roman Catholics and United Methodists. Despite our deepening consensus on the interrelation of word and Eucharist, the presence of Christ in its various aspects, the meaning of memorial (anamnesis), sacrifice, prayer of invoking the Spirit (*epiclesis*) and the meal context of the Eucharist, we must face questions concerning authority and ministry.

1. There remains a lack of clarity about the teaching authority concerning eucharistic and baptismal faith and practice within the United Methodist Church. The recently published "Supplemental Worship Resources" series is a sign of hope for United Methodists. We may expect a growing acceptance of the liturgical documents and their accompanying pastoral instruction, which reflect some of the foundational ecumenical elements noted in this report. It is true in both churches that eucharistic practice and understanding will mature gradually as the new eucharistic prayers are better understood, and more adequately taught and celebrated in their richness and variety in both seminaries and congregations.
2. We have not explored the problems concerning our different understandings of ordained ministry in relation to sacramental celebration. Eucharistic sharing awaits our mutual

understanding of the nature and authority of church order and ministry. This includes the question of the ordination of women. Our conversations showed that recovery of a more authentic conception of the Eucharist will assist us with issues concerning ministry and its importance in the midst of the priestly people.

3. During our discussions we asked: Who authorizes? Who may celebrate? What does it mean to be in communion with one another? This brings us face to face with the question of how the church can claim to offer what Christ offers. This is rooted in the unresolved problems of church authority and structure. For Roman Catholics the challenge is to appropriate the images of the church articulated in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and highlighted in recent liturgical reforms. For United Methodists, the challenge is to appropriate a more ecumenical understanding of the church in light of their Anglican, Reformed and Wesleyan roots. United Methodists must deal with some conflicting concepts of the church inherited from the American experience of the past two centuries. Also, there is a need to address those factors that inhibit a more sacramentally informed understanding of the nature of the church and its ministry.

A Summons

Out of the harvest of mutual understanding, we urge the continuance of the formal Roman Catholic/United Methodist dialogue. Further, we encourage our churches and their local congregations to extend dialogue by sharing a common lectionary, joining in a common commitment to serve one another and the world in Christ's name, and practicing all such common prayer and study of God's word that opens our lives to the unity implied in our common baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray that congregations will experience a renewed life together; that they will commit themselves to evangelization and service to the world, empowered by a eucharistic life of prayer, consistent with recent reforms in both traditions. We too, in this dialogue, have experienced the joy and graced surprise of deeper union in Christ as we explored the growing convergences and sensed the varied richness preserved in our different expressions of eucharistic theology and piety. Our work and prayer have led us to respect more deeply our differences and our similarities as these constitute a call to deeper sharing.

We long for the day when all shall gather at the one table. In the meantime, we will share the word and work of Christ, and in profound gratitude and great hope cry out, "Come, Holy Spirit."

Notes

1. In the United Methodist Church these conversations were begun by the former Commission on Ecumenical Affairs and continued since 1972 by the Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns Division, Board of Global Ministries (EICD). On the Roman Catholic side, the dialogue is sponsored by the Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA) of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
2. Publications Office, United States Catholic Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.
3. See the RC/World Methodist Council report on the Holy Spirit, 1979.
4. Cf. *Holiness and Spirituality of the Ordained Ministry*, 1976, United Methodist/Roman Catholic Report.

