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## The Relationship of Eucharistic Communities in Latin America and the United States

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITIES IN LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE UNITED STATES

by

Claudia A. Ramisch

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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## VITA

The author, Claudia A. Ramisch, is the younger daughter of William and JoAnn Ramisch. She was born 2 April 1961, in Toledo, Ohio. Her elementary education and secondary education was obtained at Catholic schools in the Toledo area. She graduated from Notre Dame Academy in 1979.

Ms. Ramisch entered Lourdes College, Sylvania, Ohio in September of 1979. She completed an Associate of Arts in 1982. In 1984, she received the degrees of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies and Bachelor of Individualized Studies. While attending Lourdes College, she spent a year as a full-time volunteer in parish ministry for the Diocese of Toledo. She was elected a member of Phi Theta Kappa in 1980 and Theta Alpha Kappa in 1983. She served as Liturgist/Musician for the College Chapel from 1980-1984 and as Vice-President of Student Government from 1983-1984. She was also involved in parish ministry in the area.

In September, 1984, Ms. Ramisch was granted an assistantship in Theology at Loyola University of Chicago, enabling her to pursue graduate studies. After a year of full-time study, she resumed an active ministry while working on her thesis. She has served St. Jude's Parish in South Bend as Liturgist/Music Director, the Diocese of Nashville as Co-Director of the Ministry and Leadership Formation Program, and the Diocese of Marquette in her current position as Director of the Newman Center in Sault Ste. Marie.

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## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS THE QUESTION REGARDING EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITIES AND BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES?

In this paper I will demonstrate that Eucharistic Communities in the United States and Basic Christian Communities in Latin America are actually complementary expressions of one theology which is synthesized in Paragraph 10 of The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

An obvious question is, "Why would I think there was any such relationship between these two types of communities?" I must confess that I became aware of the relationship in an intuitive way first. I was working with liturgy in typical middle American parishes and reading some Liberation Theology. Although I couldn't quite articulate it, I knew that what my choirs, liturgical ministers, and committees were experiencing and asking echoed the experiences and questions of Liberation Theology. They were asking things like: What difference does my faith make in my daily life? What difference does membership in this community make? Do the examples of the Scripture heroes, especially Jesus, speak to us? Does the Gospel form our attitudes? Are we working to make the place in which we live a more just and equitable place? How are we

addressing situations of alienation? Are we a transforming and reconciling community? How should we pray together? What do the sacraments mean in our community? How should the Church be involved in social issues? What is the meaning of authority in the Church?

As I understood it, Basic Christian Communities were the growing fields for Liberation Theology. So initially I explained this echo as the same thing happening but from different cultural directions: in both places, the Church was finding new life in grassroots movement.

Obviously, I was not alone in this thought. Many people were (and still are) trying to uncover Liberation Theology in North America and other cultures. This search takes many forms. It may be suggested that the themes of Liberation are constant for all and must simply be translated to the cultural setting. Or it may be suggested that the small group dynamic transcends culture and is the true heart of liberation. And there is the suggestion that Liberation Theology cannot rightly belong to any group which has not experienced economic and cultural oppression and so can only limp in white middle America. Conversely, it can thrive in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and oppressed cultures within North America. This last suggestion would determine that the grassroots movements are actually independent of each other.



Although each of these seemed to have merit, I did not find any of them really satisfactory. Each of them settled the issue too easily. I was witnessing great change in my people and I knew it was related to their understanding and practice of liturgy. So I reconsidered what they had been studying (liturgy, liturgy documents, Church history, and the lectionary) and doing (praying, working, socializing, and reaching out together). And I returned to the liturgy documents. The answer was staring me in the face.

In Paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council synthesized the experience I was watching and clarified the intuition I had. Specifically, in Paragraph 10, the Council Fathers said, "Still, the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church's power flows." Simply put, the middle Americans I had worked with had moved from experiencing liturgy as only a fount, to experiencing it as a summit and a fount. This shift was profound.

I went a step further and surmised that their original position was not unusual in the American Church. By and large, the North American Church has had a strong bias toward liturgy as a fount. So much so that many of our people attend church as if they were pulling into a full-serve station for a fill-up. They expect the Eucharist to be there to suit them, at

their convenience. My colleagues and I have lived through many parish battles and wars about the convenience of Mass times, revising weekend schedules to be more realistic ministerially, sustaining parish life in an academic milieu, and the necessity of having Mass on our own turf. Often good people are caught unconsciously, but forcefully, by the attitude that they should be filled up with only minimal effort. The good news is that some folks in some parishes are beginning to inch toward a more rounded approach to Eucharist.

By contrast, the South American experience has long been one of liturgy as a summit. Particularly Eucharistic liturgy is not a weekly event for most people. If parish life is going to happen, its most frequent expression is going to be in other ways: Bible study, faith sharing, catechesis, social programs, neighborhood/village projects, etc. Consequently, when the parish gathers for Eucharist, it is pulling together from all its activities, its "apostolic works." As an aside, it must also broaden its understanding of liturgy because it must naturally gather for worship more than it celebrates Eucharist.

Considering the North American experience of liturgy as a fount and the South American experience of liturgy as a summit shed new light on my intuition. I recognized the relationship of North and South as complementary. In a nutshell, I realized our fascination with Liberation Theology is a natural affinity. We need each other's predominant understanding of liturgy if we

are going to live full Christian lives. After all, it is our Eucharistic worship and our understandings and use of it which are most basic to our Christianity.

This realization was a significant refinement of my original understanding of the relationship between communities in two vastly different cultures. Quite naturally, it forced me to organize my thinking and material in a new way. I began again by framing my work in light of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

Vatican II was prophetic in its articulation of the importance of liturgy; it read the signs of the times and named the outcomes accurately. For one, it reminded us of the centrality and power of Eucharist. And for another, it synthesized two views of liturgy which were polar into a balanced whole. What my people had been experiencing was a transformation to balance in their lives. And I posit they were a microcosm of the relationship of two major entities.

Just because I am convinced of this relationship doesn't make it so. The work of this thesis then is to convince you of the same thing. I have laid out the pieces of the puzzle so as to first define the terms community, Eucharist, and Eucharistic community, and then to explore cultural expressions of Eucharistic community. I am confident the conclusion will seem more than reasonable when all the pieces are put together.

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

This chapter strives to establish working sociological and theological definitions of community. Rather than choose one definition from the outset and then build a case around it, I have chosen to survey definitions to seek common elements and outstanding disparities. While it would be interesting in itself to pursue the debate about definition (especially among sociologists), this is not our purpose. Rather our purpose is to come to a definition of community which does not commit sociological heresy and which will be useful to theological discussion.

#### Sociological definitions

It seems that there is not simple agreement on the definition of community from a sociological perspective. At one point a sociologist reviews no less than ninety-four definitions and just a few years later another sociologist suggests the elimination of the term itself! However, there are some moments in the debate which can be considered foundational to establishing a definition.

One such moment is the seminal work of Ferdinand Tonnies, Community and Society, which was published in 1887. Indeed much of

the debate about an adequate definition of community centers around this work. In it, Tonnies divides social relationships into two categories: community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (or association) (*Gesellschaft*).

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Table 1: Distinctions Between Community and Society

COMMUNITY	SOCIETY/ASSOCIATION
Intimate relationships	Impersonal ties
"Worth" is who you are	"Worth" is what you do
Sentimental attachments	Contractual ties
Clear moral codes; internalized and socialized	Task orientation
Ties to some specific locality	Locality is not primary
Stable, "traditional" authority	"Rational-legal" authority

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The summary of this analysis is stated very clearly by Bell and Newby:

For Tonnies, there are three central aspects of *Gemeinschaft*: blood, place (land) and mind, with their sociological consequences of kinship, neighborhood, and friendship. Together they were the home of all virtue and morality. *Gesellschaft*, however, has a singularity about it; in Tonnies' terms, 'all its activities are restricted to a definite end and a definite means of obtaining it.'

They go on to say, this dichotomy (community-society) is considered a classic analysis typical of nineteenth century sociology. It is easy, even for an outsider, to see the effect of Tonnies on the community debate, for similarities to his work turn up regularly. For instance, Redfield, another sociologist, discusses a village-city continuum using the same kind of typology.<sup>2</sup> And as another

example, Richmond expands the dichotomy and discusses instead a traditional-industrial-post-industrial continuum, in which the traditional and industrial categories are directly built on the community and society categories.<sup>3</sup>

In the middle of this century, Talcott Parsons with Edward Shils in Toward A General Theory of Action (1952), described social interactions through a number of continua. Basically, these continua are as follows:

1. Affectivity vs. affective neutrality
2. Specificity vs. diffuseness
3. Universalism vs. particularism
4. Quality vs. performance (ascription vs. achievement)

Generally affectivity, diffuseness, particularism, and quality (or ascription) were considered to describe community. This was because emotional involvement, broad and inclusive ties of kinship, conditions peculiar to the actors in the situation, and bloodlines were seen to characterize local social systems. Whereas affective neutrality, specificity, universalism, and performance (or achievement) were considered to describe society at large. Or to put it in plain language, society in general was characterized by a lack of emotional involvement, narrowly defined relationships (eg. supplier to client), generalized standards, and performance requirements (eg. a college degree). It should be noted that Parsons' studies were of pattern-variables as they emerged in industrial society and defined all social action. Therefore, while these continua (as applied to the community-society dichotomy) are

only a small piece of Parsons' work, they do demonstrate some of the lasting quality in Tonnies' theory. <sup>4</sup>

I propose to use the following chart which builds on the work of Tonnies and Parsons and the work of a contemporary sociologist, Randall Stokes.<sup>5</sup> The summary of community is from Evelyn Eaton Whitehead's, "The Structure of Community: Toward Forming the Parish As a Community of Faith."<sup>6</sup> I have been assured by another sociologist, Irene Boyd, of the Diocese of Nashville, Ministry Formation Services, that though this is not by any means an exhaustive piece, it is sound and useful.

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Table 2: Synthesis of Characteristics of Social Groups

PRIMARY GROUPS	COMMUNITIES	ASSOCIATIONS
Small in size- allows face-to-face interaction of members	Common orientation about some significant aspect of life	Large in size- formal organization and structure for interaction
High intensity participation, emotional exchange, and personal sharing	A commitment to common goals  Some agreement about values	Individual identity known by specific role or task in group
Homogeneous nature- people group together because of similarities in interests, values, activities	Opportunities for personal exchange  Agreed-upon definitions of what is expected of membership in this group	Heterogeneous nature- focus beyond selves and group, more explicit understanding of rights and responsibilities in activity

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Community, then, is a social form in which the participants share some values, act on some common goals, have the opportunity for personal interaction, and have some recognized expectations of each other. In some circles, it would be important to add a comment about physical and psychological boundaries, a specific geographic area.

## Theological definitions

At times, defining community for the theologian is like a mathematician defining a prime number. Within the framework of the Church it seems self-evident, but from outside the framework its meaning is nebulous or even obscure. Whereas sociologists fight over just what kind of social form community really is, theologians often simply presume it. And if they define it, they do so in a rather circuitous or even backhanded way.

Having said this, I must also acknowledge that recent North American writings, in particular, have been including more reference to sociological considerations of community. This is the result of two recent developments in the Church. One is the Second Vatican Council which revived images of the Church such as "People of God". And the other is radical changes in neighborhood and parish life, which have forced us to move from our own insular identities. In previous decades in this country, Catholic communities were for the most part self-contained. Catholics provided all the basic services to other Catholics. Hence, community identity was a clear and simple matter. Social and technological shifts have changed the boundaries within which Catholics operate; no longer are they insulated. With this preface, I turn to a survey of some theological definitions of community.

Philip Murnion, in "The Parish as Source of Community and Identity,"<sup>7</sup> says firstly, "A community...is constituted by the relationships among people who are committed to certain values."



Some of those certain values include: each member as a person to other members, sustained commitment to each other, and the approach to such issues as life, death, family, work, poverty/wealth, success/failure, individual freedom, collective responsibility, etc. The articulation of these values may be either formal or informal, that is either in things like constitutional statements or in behavior (eg: work, ceremonies).

All of this is groundwork for Murnion's concept of a "symbolic value community" which is a group that shares, supports, and clarifies values which are foundational. It is a group which "(a) expresses some meaning for life; (b) engages more than the intellect; and (c) moves us to action which is expressive of the deepest elements of our being." Such a community appeals to intelligence, emotion, and the aesthetic in us. While it does not fully express its values or symbols, it does involve its members fully. Thus a symbolic value community is the image Murnion uses to describe Church community. It can be presumed from context that the most frequent experience of this is within a parish.

Dennis Geaney, in Quest for Community, defines community basically as, "intermediate social groups that both nurture their members and have a collective influence on their environment."<sup>6</sup> Such a group is built on trust and built over years. It "presumes continuity, a history of shared goals, struggles, and the experience of what life can be at its best." Such a group is friendship on a larger scale. And according to Geaney, such a group within the

Church (or parish) must have strength in formation, worship, and outreach. Liturgy is not just a place and time of celebration, but a place and time of conversion. And the group is not turned in on itself, but aware of and reaching out to others.<sup>9</sup>

In the opening article for Volume 3 of the Alternate Futures for Worship Series, Bernard Lee provides a very simple definition of community:

A group of people who have two levels of concerns. First, they care about the quality of life of the individual members of the community and their shared experience together. (But,) second, together they are also deeply concerned about the larger world around them and the quality of its life.<sup>10</sup>

Participation in a community is a deliberate and free choice of its members, so they are rightly called intentional communities. Usually this title implies groupings which are small enough to allow personal interaction.

In Chapter 2 of the same volume (pp.49-84), John Haughey very carefully discusses a communitarian consciousness and two primary Scriptural images for Christian community. The consciousness of which he speaks is an individual's awareness of being related to social wholes and discovering his/her uniqueness in that relationship. In other words, the person is not an isolated individual who is accidentally connected to social groups. This dovetails with his discussion of Paul's images of "Body of Christ" and fellowship.

When Paul talks of "Body of Christ," he speaks of the Christ who is NOW. Christian communities are members of His reality and members of each other. Such have been transformed by the Holy

Spirit and such allows the Spirit to touch the world. When Paul talks of "fellowship", he speaks of bonds of friendship initiated by God between his Son and believers; bonds so intense that the friends share material goods mutually. It is relationship modeled on the internal life of God; God who has broadened his communion to include human needs and suffering; God who loves. Hence, love is the primary charism of the Spirit and that which marks the Christian community.

To return to the idea of communitarian consciousness, Haughey points out the importance of love in the discovery of one's uniqueness and in relationship. Commenting on the Corinthian church, Haughey uses Paul to conclude that a true Christian community should stand out from the culture around it and should be a consecrating force for the culture because of its love. The test and definition of community is:

....if it knows itself, (it) stands for things that differentiate it from the dominant culture, and locates itself within certain boundaries: affective, moral, relational, spiritual, doctrinal, logical, liturgical.<sup>11</sup>

Allegiance in such a community is clear and primary.

In Catholicism, Richard McBrien says there is no such thing as an individual Christian. Community is necessary to faith and life in Christ. And to whatever level of the Church the term community is applied, it is a living organism, centered on Jesus the Messiah, tracing its life back to Jesus, celebrating the Eucharist, and greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>12</sup>

Later he describes community as a model of the Church. In this model, community is "a people whose principal task is the promotion and sustaining of personal growth through interpersonal relationships." In this, the teaching of the Church as the People of God is emphasized as is the Church's responsibility to contribute positively to human growth and to be a sign of Christ's presence by mutual love (be missionary). In McBrien's estimation the model is weak because of its "fuzzy" image. The distinctive nature of community is not specified and the importance of social and political involvement, and the renewal of the institution may not be emphasized.<sup>13</sup>

And yet even later, he says the church is not just any community but one "of those who have been transformed by Christ and the Holy Spirit and who have explicitly and thankfully acknowledged the source of that transformation."<sup>14</sup> With his odd conglomeration of comments, McBrien brings us to the point of synthesis.

It is obvious that the theologians and pastors agree with almost all of the elements of the sociological definition of community. The only element which is neglected is geographic location. It could be argued that location is a presumed element in some of the above definitions which focus on community within a parish, but this issue seems almost inconsequential.

Now that such "data" is assembled, I have elements to define community from a faith perspective. In parentheses beneath each

element are references to its authors. This definition will serve later as the cornerstone of the definition of Eucharistic community.

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Table 3: Theological Definition of Community

Community is a group of people characterized by:

Faith in Christ and experience of the Holy Spirit  
(Haughey, McBrien)

Personal relationships  
(Murnion, Geaney, Lee, Haughey, McBrien)

Shared values and ongoing clarification of them  
(Murnion, Geaney, Lee, Haughey)

A liturgical life  
(Murnion, Geaney, Haughey, McBrien)

A group identity distinct from the society around them,  
but connected to church  
(Murnion, Haughey, McBrien)

Social awareness and outreach  
(Murnion, Geaney, Lee, Haughey, McBrien)

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## CHAPTER III

### WHAT IS EUCHARIST?

Libraries have been written about Eucharist, but I am not concerned with crawling through all of them for this chapter. Again I am interested in the functional-- a working understanding of Eucharist as sacrament and center of the Christian life.

#### Sacrament

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church provides valuable tools for outlining this discussion. It says in the first article:

By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind. She is also an instrument of such union and unity.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the basic elements of sacrament are: relationship (God to us, us to each other, the Church to Christ), action (visible sign, instrument of union and unity), and attitude (intimate union, something which relies on the goodwill and commitment of its participants). Also by this, the Church becomes the framework of what we call the seven sacraments. Each of the seven is a specific expression of the Church's nature, or relationship with Christ. Each brings some development to the union and unity in the relationships mentioned above. The document goes on to declare the Eucharist is the central sacrament for this development.<sup>2</sup>

Eucharist understood as sacrament, then, is concerned with action and attitude. It is an action and it causes action. It is an attitude and it forms attitudes.

#### Action

So, what kind of action is Eucharist? Several consistent descriptions of Eucharist emerge from the Conciliar and Post-conciliar documents. The ones which will be used in this section are: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, and The Instruction on Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery.

First, Eucharist is a symbolic action. This means that it is an action with many levels of meaning. Some of those meanings are described in Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery (Sacred Congregation of Rites, 25 May 1967): a sacrifice, a memorial, a sacred banquet renewing the New Covenant and foreshadowing the eschatological banquet. The meanings work together almost like a marbled cake- even though you know its ingredients and how it's put together, it always looks different when it comes out of the oven. And even though each flavor and color is distinct, they can never really be separated from each other when you eat it. As a symbolic action Eucharist captures the effect of the marbled cake by putting together ingredients which are obvious and related-- even inseparable- but which take on richer and fuller meanings by being layered against each other. When these are placed in

conjunction with what participants bring to the action, the meanings reach levels which cannot be expressed in any kind of document, but can only be savored.

Eucharist is a complex liturgical action. "Complex" tells us it is comprised of several elements. Specifically these are: Introductory Rites (gathering), Liturgy of the Word (storytelling, praying for the needs of the group), Liturgy of the Eucharist (sharing a meal), and Concluding Rites (going out together).<sup>3</sup>

"Liturgical" tells us it belongs to or is the work of the people, a public work, not a private function. In fact it is an action which concerns the whole Church. "Liturgical" also tells us that it includes ritual-- stylized action which is repeated regularly and consistently. Liturgical ritual includes specific roles and patterns for all who participate.<sup>4</sup>

Eucharist is a sacred action. In other words, it is initiated by God and counts on the presence of God. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy emphasizes this by saying Christ is present in: the person of the minister, the bread and wine, the Scriptures, the action of those gathered, and the assembly. Indeed, every liturgical celebration is "an action of Christ the priest and of His Body the Church."<sup>5</sup>

Eucharist is a summary action. Returning to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, paragraph 10 says that the sanctification of all and the glorification of God is the end toward which all the activity of the Church is directed. And this end is "most



powerfully achieved" in the Eucharistic liturgy. For those united in faith, to celebrate Eucharist is the ultimate goal. In this way, Eucharist summarizes, or draws together, the work of the Church.

Eucharist is a formative action. Throughout the documents of Vatican II, there are repeated references to the power of the Eucharist to form those who participate in it. Specifically, partakers of Eucharist are formed and re-formed into the Body of Christ, fortified to preach Christ, nourished into charity, and sanctified.<sup>6</sup> The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church speaks of the formative power of all the sacraments for the Christian life, but Eucharist is the sustaining, renewing force.<sup>7</sup> It is by its formative nature that Eucharist causes action, or initiates the work of the Church. The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity makes this point very plainly. The apostolate involves proclaiming the Gospel, transforming the temporal sphere, and works of mercy and charity- charity being "the soul of the entire apostolate." This is the charity which is communicated and nourished by the Eucharist.<sup>8</sup>

Eucharist then causes personal action in terms of "the faithful" living holy lives which bear witness to the love of Christ. It causes communal action in terms of the faithful who celebrate it together and who share a parish life. It causes communal action in terms of family life (the domestic church) and good human relations. And finally, it causes societal action

toward justice and responsibility when the faithful are concerned with conforming the world to Christian values.<sup>3</sup>

### Attitude

An attitude is a framework or stance by which a person considers the outside world. It is a disposition in a particular direction and can be strengthened or weakened by incoming information.

"Eucharist" is an attitude of Christian living. It is a framework for viewing the world. First, the framework includes our orientation to God, Church, and each other. Second, it holds the purpose to our life: sanctification of creation, glorification of God. Third, it firmly establishes our own identity as growing members of the People of God. Fourth, it provides within itself instruction and nourishment for the Christian conscience. Finally, its very name of thanksgiving defines a positive approach to life. In short, belonging and identity, repentance and conversion, responsibility and commitment to acting in accord with a Christian conscience define the Eucharistic attitude.

As mentioned above, instruction and nourishment within Eucharist continue its formation as an attitude. They also work to form specific attitudes toward one's family, friends, colleagues, work, education, community, and society through discernment. For example, the middle-manager who views work as an integral part of his or her apostolate will probably deal with unjust hiring

practices differently than the person who views work simply as a socially legitimate way to get a better house or car. The first is more likely to be concerned with influencing the employer for a change in practices for everyone because of a conviction that s/he should be working for justice. The second will only be concerned if the practice touches him or her specifically or if fighting it will improve his or her position.

#### Center of Christian Life

The previous several pages make it clear that Eucharist holds a preeminent place in the Christian life. It is symbolic, complex, liturgical, sacred, summatory, and formative. In short, "It is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows."<sup>10</sup> At this point, I would like to turn the focus to the significance of these particularly rich images of the summit and the fountain.

#### Summit

The summit is the highest point, either in place or achievement. It is something toward which one works or builds. In the worlds of politics and science, for example, a summit is a meeting which brings together top-ranking people to discuss the major concerns of their areas. It is not an everyday occurrence and it happens only after vigorous preparation. In effect, the summit is the peak or climax of the process.

Poets and philosophers have used "summits" to convey the importance of perspective. For one, Robert Frost, in his poem "The Mountain," discusses with a resident the view which he seeks from the mountain. The resident for his part, only views the mountain. He has never gotten around to climbing to THE view. Instead he lives by hearsay in his restricted and sheltered world. This emphasizes the effort of a climb, the desire necessary in a climber, and the risks of the climb and of being at the summit—where one is no longer sheltered.<sup>11</sup>

For another, Dag Hammarskjöld speaks of being driven up a steeper and colder pass to an unknown goal "where life resounds, a clear pure note in the silence." And he comments that when one has reached the top of a mountain, then one can measure it, and then one can find how low it was.<sup>12</sup> Both thoughts indicate again the exertion of the climb. But they each add an interesting twist. The first indicates another force at work with the climber, pushing him or her beyond the conditional world. The second indicates that the climb is not an accomplishment but part of an extended quest. (The view may be great, but then there's another peak to scale!)

Of course, in the Christian community we have not only the descriptions of poets and philosophers, but the primary source of the Scripture. Throughout Scripture, mountaintop experiences are often moments of encounter with God. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jesus, and the apostles are just a few of the characters who climb to meet God. These moments generally reveal something about God's

identity and will. They indicate strength, power, majesty, and understanding. But they also reveal something about the characters who climb. They are already committed people, hence their encounter is not an initial conversion, but the deepening of an existing relationship. For each of them, the mountain makes clear something on which they are already working. The pinnacle draws them on and rewards them.

An outstanding mountain story of the New Testament is the Transfiguration as told in the Gospel of Mark (9:2-8). While this story is not primarily Eucharistic in intention, it is an excellent description of summit. As such it can illuminate our understanding of the experience of the Eucharistic summit.

In the story, Jesus, Peter, James, and John go to the mountain after much discussion about Jesus' identity and the meaning of discipleship. On the mountain, Jesus meets and converses with Elijah and Moses. The apostles watch in happy amazement. For a time, everything is startlingly clear. God "rolls in" (!) with the same message from Jesus' baptism, but now says it for the benefit of the apostles. And it's over. They get the message that Jesus stands alone in a history of greats; Jesus is the Messiah.<sup>13</sup>

Several points of this story are worth highlighting:

The apostles go to the mountain with Jesus.

The mountain is truly a peak experience: the participants are drawn into a spirit of celebration and awe.

The experience clarifies and satisfies what the group has been struggling with.

The experience ratifies and extends what they already know.

On the mountain God speaks plainly and directly.

Although the characters, words, and place are familiar, the experience is unusual and outstanding.

### Fountain

It may be that water is the most symbolic of all images because it captures the whole range of human experience, life and death and life again. But within the symbol of water, the fountain, or font, is one of the most striking.

A fountain is a source. It is the beginning or origin of something; that from which everything else comes. Typically, a fountain is associated with fresh, flowing water. It is a place of refreshment and revival. Civilization is built around it and sustained by it. Even in the highly technical world, the image of a fountain is basic. It constantly creeps into our everyday conversation. People who are particularly well-versed in an area are called a "font of knowledge (or wisdom)." When we express some deep feeling from our souls, we may easily put it in terms of emotion "welling up inside us." And people who are inspiring to us are "overflowing with enthusiasm" or "bubbling with energy."

Fountains, like those in parks or town squares, are centers of gathering; they invite our participation. In fact, they are almost irresistible. They cross all cultural lines. They appeal to our artistic nature. They bring out our playful side. Their

sound soothes us. They make us feel clean. Their patterns fascinate and intrigue us. In short, they fill our senses.

For all the aesthetic appeal of fountains, they are basically useful. By definition, they are the start of things. This is the primary meaning of the image in conjunction with Eucharist. Eucharist is the source, the basis, of Christian life. It fills the senses, but it fills them for a task which is not only self-contained. It fills the Christian community and sends it forth to build the kingdom of God.

The font is an idea which is given much attention in Scripture. In the Psalms, God is the stream of running water for which the soul longs and by which one is blessed (eg. Pss. 1, 42, 63). In Isaiah, streams are a sign of the deliverance and restoration of Israel (eg. Is 35, 44). In John, Jacob's well is the spot where Jesus discusses "living water" with a Samaritan woman (Jn.4). The examples go on and on but ultimately, the font which the Scripture describes- as stream or river or well- is God. And God fills his people that they may live holy lives and may make him known in all the earth. That is the fountain of Eucharist.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT IS A EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY?

#### Definition

It is obvious that a Eucharistic community is a community which has Eucharist at its center. Community life builds to the Eucharistic summit and flows from the Eucharistic fount. Or to put it another way, a Eucharistic community is one which has a sacramental character with Eucharist as its core. Consequently the basic elements of sacrament and Eucharist are evident in the life of the community.

A Eucharistic community puts together the definitions and descriptions of the previous two chapters in this way:

SACRAMENT/EUCHARIST	!	COMMUNITY
Relationship- God to us	!	Experience of the Holy Spirit
- Us to each other	!	Personal relationships
- Church to Christ	!	The group identifies with the Church and shares faith in Christ
Action- Symbolic	!	A liturgical life
- Liturgical	!	Faith in Christ and experience of the Holy Spirit
- Sacred	!	Ongoing clarification of shared values
- Formative	!	
- Summatory	!	
Attitude- Framework	!	Shared values
	!	Social awareness and outreach while remaining outside the culture



Viewed in this way, the elements of community and the qualities of Eucharist are almost inseparable. According to Casiano Floristan in The Parish-- Eucharistic Community, this blending is rooted in the Hebrew tradition and developed naturally from it. The resultant entity, the Eucharistic community, rightly belongs in what we know today as the parish.

Floristan carefully traces the origins and development of parish until he comes to this conclusion:

Since for all practical purposes the life of the Church is concentrated in each of her parish-community units, it is therefore true that a renewal of the reality and idea of the parish means a renewal of the whole Church. We know that the parish was born historically and did not come into being by divine right. We also know that history has not been interrupted since the third or fourth century, the time of its birth. Today we can freely discuss and dispute many of its aspects, but judging from history, one thing is beyond doubt: in essence the parish constitutes the cornerstone in the pastoral life of Christ's Mystical Body.<sup>1</sup>

With a conclusion like that, it is clear a brief survey of its foundation can only enhance the portrayal of Eucharistic community. Consequently, I now turn to a sketch of Floristan's study

First, Floristan tells us the term "parish" comes from the Greek term "paroikia," which was preceded by "paroikos" meaning both neighbor and foreigner, a resident with certain rights and protection but without full citizenship. Likewise the verb "paroikein" means both to live together and to live abroad. Abraham, Lot, Isaac, and Jacob's sons are all examples of such foreigners.<sup>2</sup> A group of such foreigners formed a parish.

Placed in this context Floristan establishes a simple understanding of parish as:

foreigners, in a world which is not theirs (in which they have some rights but not full citizenship), forming a community on pilgrimage toward the Promised Land. The biblical origin of the term 'parish' is neither juridical nor sociological but purely and simply religious.<sup>3</sup>

From Old Testament times on, a very important aspect of this community was its assembly. This included a convocation (decided by the supreme authority of the people in the name of God) where the community listened to the Word of God and responded to it- with a profession of faith and a sacrificial rite (which included a prayer of blessing or thanksgiving by a community official/ presider)- and were dismissed by the presider.<sup>4</sup>

The New Testament communities preserved the self-understanding of being foreigners in a strange land, but developed their title as "Church of God" and took on new characteristics for its assembly, namely:

1. The assembly centered around the person of the Lord in order to share his life.
2. The assembly considered itself like a family.
3. The assembly took in all kinds of people.
4. The assembly understood that anyone who "...wishes to be first, shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mk. 9:34).

The activity of the community included preaching, worship, and pastoral care. And within worship were contained first Eucharist, then elements of other sacraments, and the beginnings of the liturgy of hours.<sup>5</sup>

The parish as a localized, bounded community with a self-contained structure did not appear frequently until the third and fourth centuries. It first established itself in rural areas. Then as the Church became THE religious group, the Christian sense of living as foreigners receded and the structure and stability of a growing institution moved in. However it wasn't until the fifth and sixth centuries that the term "parish" was applied with uniformity to local communities. This application grew from synodal delineations of the rights and duties of the bishop and diocesan Church and the priest and parochial Church.<sup>6</sup>

#### American expressions of Eucharistic Community

##### Parish

The Catholic Church in the United States has had a full and rich life already and parishes have been at the heart of its broad development. According to the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life (referred to as CPL)<sup>7</sup>, American parishes continue to be diverse in size, description, interest, services, and development. Generalizations both reveal and conceal such diversity, but are necessary to continue any discussion. (It should be noted that the study deliberately deals only with Non-Hispanic parishes. The study also relies on data gathered from people who are participating members in a parish.)

I shall discuss the parish as the primary American expression of Eucharistic community. It is my contention that American

Catholics come first to the parish at large and from there fit themselves into that which meets their interests and needs.

Report No. 2 of CPL simply states that Catholicism is now a mainstream church in the United States.<sup>9</sup> This is a major shift of status, particularly in the last 25-30 years. As a persecuted minority, Catholics often insulated themselves from the culture. They became what Philip Murnion calls a "comprehensive community."<sup>8</sup> Socialization happened within the system and all services to the group were provided from within- even medical care and education. Structural, educational, economic, and attitudinal changes have brought on the decline of the comprehensive system. Catholics in America are experiencing the same tension of culture and community that other Christian groups experience.

Perhaps John Westerhoff explains this best when he delineates three cultural characteristics of Americans which hinder the development of community: privatism, individualism, and secularism.<sup>10</sup> Because America is founded on principles of pluralism and diversity, religious expression is not only not uniform, but it is optional. We speak highly of the separation of church and state which is effectively religious neutrality. We don't mind if you express your faith so long as you don't do it in a way which impinges on my own time or space. "Religion (is) a highly private matter."<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Americans prize their autonomy and independence. In our society one comes to full stature when one is independent. And finally, we are fascinated by science,

technology, logic, objectivity, and the material. We count on what we can have and hold and figure out. All of this flies against three primary characteristics of Christianity: public witness, collective (or corporate) identity, and reverence of the sacred (i.e. mystery). Christianity is out of step with our culture. For those who live in the culture and believe as Christians there is great tension.

Catholic parishes exemplify this tension in leanings like: an emphasis on the need for keeping politics out of religion, more democratic structures within the parish, concern with personal piety and a haven from stress, and a preference for charity rather than justice.<sup>12</sup> In short, we in America are at the painful point of juncture between Catholic and cultural identity.

In light of this it is interesting that Report No.1 of CPL<sup>13</sup> says that the majority of Catholics find their spiritual needs are well met by their parishes. They do not feel the same satisfaction of their social needs at the parish but neither do they expect their social needs to be met in this setting. Also, as Catholics become more educated, their involvement in the spiritual life and service/leadership of the parish increases- as does their involvement in personal growth efforts (i.e Bible study, renewal groups, etc).

The CPL study does comment that Catholics in suburban parishes (which are the largest parishes) express interest in having professional psychological, family, and health counselors

available to them.<sup>14</sup> And Catholics in general have a concern about energy being put into more and better religious education.

Without openly saying it, CPL indicates a majority of Catholics positively perceive the parish as a specialized center for spiritual well-being. (The exceptions to these generalizations occur in widely varying degrees in rural areas, small towns, and urban centers.)

One thing which seems to remain, even within the changes from a "comprehensive community," is general acceptance of the idea of a parish as a geographic area. Although most Catholics are more mobile, and do attend more than the parish in which they reside, they tend to stay home most of the time.<sup>15</sup>

The heart of the parish is the celebration of Sunday Eucharist. Great variations in the styles of celebration lend themselves to the development of specific Eucharistic communities within a parish. These in turn spawn the small discussion groups, Bible studies, and so on. Hence, the specialized spiritual center is a direct outgrowth of Sunday Mass.

### Liturgy

Parishes in the United States have experienced great and deliberate change in their Eucharistic celebrations in the last 25-30 years. The CPL reports that liturgical changes are the most obvious and most commented on changes in the Church.<sup>16</sup> What

parishioners usually don't suspect is the scope of the liturgical movement.

In the 1940's and 1950's, the Benedictine Liturgical Conference and The Liturgical Conference were holding annual study weeks around the liturgical developments recommended by Rome and their implementation in the United States. Suggestions were made for the official involvement of the bishops in the work of these groups, but they (the bishops) shied away from it. As Pope Pius XII began his work of liturgical reform, it became more difficult for American bishops to refrain from involvement as a conference.

When bilingual rituals were introduced into sacramental celebrations (other than Eucharist), an ad hoc committee was formed by the bishops to deal with the preparation of the text: Collectio Rituum (1954). Finally in 1957, a formal proposal was submitted to the bishops' annual gathering for the formation of a national commission on liturgy. Although many reforms and/or developments in liturgical practice were met with suspicion by the bishops at large, the liturgical movement continued to grow, more liturgical questions were being addressed to the bishops' conference, and some bishops were interested personally. The proposal was accepted and the commission was formed in 1958.

The role of the Commission (now the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy) was to study, report, prepare, advise, recommend, request, etc. on anything liturgical. It was not a policy-making group and none of its findings or suggestions were binding on anyone.

However, as the Second Vatican Council unfolded, the Commission prepared for change.

Practically speaking, the hand of the bishops' conference was forced by popular, papal, and scholarly developments into establishing a commission which became the vehicle of sweeping reform in liturgical practice across the country. The groundwork of The Liturgical Conference, the Liturgical Press, the University of Notre Dame's liturgical studies program, publications like "Orate Fratres," and parish pioneers moved the American Church along solidly, albeit quietly. When the Council passed the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", the way was not unexplored.<sup>17</sup> What was left was to take it to the person in the pew.

It would seem this has been accomplished to some degree. The changes which people mentioned most frequently according to the CPL were primarily those of Sunday Mass: the use of English, the priest facing the people, the increased participation of the assembly, lay persons as lectors and Eucharistic ministers.<sup>18</sup> The outward signs of liturgical reform have been noticed and generally appreciated. But what has this meant for the experience of Eucharist?

For one, it has strengthened the grip Eucharist has on parish attention. The study indicates that most parish activities tend to focus on sustaining the worshipping or the social community, rather than on outreach.<sup>19</sup> (And as the reports read overall, it is clear the attention on the worshipping community greatly exceeds that on the social community.)



For another, it has opened new parish works to parishioners, especially women. No longer is the Eucharist a function to be observed, but a time to be involved. No longer is the Eucharist "performed" by men only. Men and women share the liturgical ministries and the assembly is necessary to the celebration.

For yet another, it has deepened the idea of Eucharist as basic to parish life and Catholic identity. The greatest number of people claiming ties to parishes or Catholicity do so based on their attendance at Mass.

This idea almost consumes a parish. People tend to expect that if everything else were to shut down in a parish, Sunday Mass would continue. They so cannot conceive of a parish without it, that few people have seriously considered the possibility. (And this despite the bleak picture vocations directors paint!) Sunday Mass is both basically satisfying and taken for granted. CPL even goes so far as saying the experience of Eucharist seems to be more fount than summit, a sustaining but not peak experience.<sup>20</sup>

To put it succinctly, the experience of the Eucharist as a beginning or source has become even stronger in the United States by the reform of its ritual.

#### Latin American Expressions of Eucharistic Community

##### Parish life

The Catholic populations in the United States and Latin America differ in many obvious ways. The majority of Catholics in

the United States are an educated, middle class in suburban areas. The majority of the Catholics in Latin America are an uneducated or undereducated, poor class in primarily rural areas. In the United States, generally one talks of parish life from the perspective of centralized efforts or programs. But in Latin America one talks of the Basic Church Communities which sustain parish life.

Basic Christian Communities (hereafter designated BCCs) are certainly not a new concept in the Christian tradition which was born a "house-church," but they have developed anew in the Third World since the mid-1950's. BCCs take many shapes, but typically they are small groups (starting at about twelve families) which meet together regularly (at least once a week) to hear and reflect on Scripture, to discuss issues facing the local community, and to decide what action faith demands of them.<sup>21</sup> These small groups may form a network and these networks form a parish. Or a network may connect itself to a parish without other networks. It is virtually impossible to estimate the number of BCCs which are functioning at this (or any) time, but the estimate ten years ago was at better than 300,000.

The explosive development of BCCs is the result of deliberate work for education in several countries. In the 1950's the Diocese of San Miguelito, Panama, began its education effort with the intention of bringing together poor people in small groups "where they knew each other and had more courage to speak out."<sup>22</sup>

In 1956, Dom Angelo Rossi began the BCC movement in Brazil, in the Rio de Janeiro district, with a community evangelization effort. This was prompted by concern over the people's lack of contact with the Church, most notably their inability to attend Mass more than once or twice a year due to distance, poor travel conditions, geographic obstacles, few priests, and on and on.

Radio schools aided the evangelization effort and caetchists became the central figure in the local groups. The catechist or coordinator was:

to do everything a lay person can do in God's church in current ecclesiastical discipline. At least, these catechists will gather the people once a week for religious instruction. Normally, they will also celebrate daily prayer with the people. On Sundays and Holy Days they will gather the people from all over the district for a 'Massless Sunday,' or 'priestless Sunday,' or 'Catholic worship,' and lead them spiritually and collectively in the same Mass as is being celebrated by the pastor in the distant mother church. They will recite morning and evening prayers with the people, as well as novenas, litanies, May and June celebrations, and so on.<sup>23</sup>

In a brief six years this procedure grew into 1,410 radio schools. This was supplemented by a team of fifteen traveling through the country teaching some 1,800 courses over five years time.

The result of this massive endeavor was the First Nationwide Pastoral Plan of the Brazilian Bishops' Conference. The plan was for 1965-70 and said that parishes should be (or already were) composed of basic communities because of the numbers with which they were dealing. Parish renewal was to nurture these basic communities, the mother church was to become one of them, and the

pastor was to preside in all of them because he had been entrusted with their care.<sup>24</sup>

The BCCs have been nurtured- in the areas of the poor. In November, 1976, at the General Assembly of Bishops of São Paulo, they assessed the situation in this way:

The creation of the CEBs (BCCs) has taken place among the lower socio-economic classes. And, in the poor areas, it has been noted that the most underprivileged have been most receptive to this ecclesial notion. The difficulties among the other classes are considerable, and when ecclesial groups come into existence, they often become closed, and introspective.<sup>25</sup>

Leonardo Boff lists these characteristics for the grassroots phenomena, the BCC:

They understand themselves as "People of God."  
 They are mostly physically poor and weak.  
 They are despoiled by social structures.  
 They are lay people.  
 Power and authority belong to the group not an individual.  
 Ministries are responses of the community to needs as they arise.  
 They are a church in society.  
 They are focused on the life of Jesus as the means of liberation.  
 They have a liturgical and sacramental life of their own.  
 They continue the tradition of the church of the poor.  
 They are in communion with the faith of the Church.  
 Unity is found in their mission.  
 They are concerned with universal causes.  
 They are apostolic in character.  
 They understand their social struggles and sufferings as a way to live holy lives.<sup>26</sup>

BCCs are not confined to Panama and Brazil, but are quite naturally situated in virtually every Third World country. And the role of the BCCs has evolved from solely education and formation to include social action. In Religion in the Secular City, Harvey Cox further illuminates this development of the BCC by commenting on

the influx of North American missionaries in Latin American countries during the 1960's. This all-out missionary offensive was due to a fear of too great a Protestant and evangelical influence on traditionally Catholic populations. Latin Americans were mainly familiar with Americans through our heavy-handed businesses and at first resented our missionary presence. Over the period of about fifteen years, American missionaries gained acceptance and lost their naivete. Those who went for "purely" religious motives returned socially and politically educated through their experience of living with the poor. The impact of their mission has been especially profound on their own communities in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

BCCs manifest a major shift in the life of the Latin American church. Traditionally, the Church has been aligned with the rich in attitude and in ministry. The poor have been neglected at best and ignored at worst. When John XXIII announced to the world (11 September 1962), "With respect to the underdeveloped countries, the Church appears as it is and wants to be: the Church of all the people and, in particular, of the poor,"<sup>28</sup> he was not addressing a recognizable reality. And except for those in the thick of the foundation of BCCs, few could be expected to appreciate the Pope's prophetic view.

Those who are despoiled by social structures, people of the BCCs, already stand outside the circles of the upper class and the powerful. In so many places, people have begun to think for

themselves and to act politically because of the education and formation they have received through their Church. They know that the atrocious conditions in which they live are not the will of God and they are convinced of their responsibility to bring about change.<sup>29</sup>

This is the root of liberation theology which clearly expresses the need for justice and for freedom from oppressive social structures. Because of its social analysis, liberation theology has taken a lot of fire. It has been accused of using the concepts and language of Karl Marx. Further it is accused of reducing liberation to temporal well-being.

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued the Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" on 6 August 1984, specifically warning adherents of liberation theology away from anything resembling a Marxist understanding of class struggle. What's more, it affirmed the Christian understanding of liberation to be first a liberation from sin through God's action.<sup>30</sup>

In the past 25-30 years, BCCs have gradually grown to numbers and practices which frighten many Church conservatives. The list of characteristics which Boff used to explain the BCC is a list which some feel rides the edge of orthodoxy because of the way those characteristics are understood at the grassroots. For example, in the understanding of BCC's, "Ministries are responses of the community to needs as they arise," means ministries are not

givens, not tied to one's official status (eg. ordination), and not concerned with preserving an established order or institution.<sup>31</sup>

Arthur McGovern, a theologian who has written extensively on Christianity and Marxism and themes of liberation, spent seven weeks in Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, and Nicaragua with the purpose of experiencing the BCC and its use of liberation theology. He observed a pattern of community life in which members were indeed deeply involved in social activism. But he also observed that the activism was informed by careful theological reflection on Scripture and used a social analysis which dealt with immediate community problems in practical ways and ways which would have a positive effect in the long-haul.<sup>32</sup>

John Welsh, pastor of Paroquia do Bom Pastor, Campinas, Brazil, also recognizes the social impact of BCCs from his pastoral experience. However, he describes two primary types of BCCs (mini-parish and family based), neither of which is remotely Marxist. The people of the BCCs are trying to live as Christians in poor social conditions. Their strength comes from the Scriptures, prayer, liturgy, and the Christian community. Social analysis is not even mentioned in the practical descriptions of their day-to-day life.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the great majority of BCCs in Latin America do not ride the edge of orthodoxy. As a case in point, they do not have deep-seated philosophical convictions about Marxism, but rather have their constant reliance on the Gospel and the Eucharist. This

two-fold reliance necessarily and rightly involves them in social-political activities, as was encouraged in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.<sup>34</sup>

## Liturgy

The origins of the BCC are found in a Eucharistic need. The people of Brazil (and other countries) did not have frequent access to the celebration of the Eucharist. They did not even have an effective means of regular formation with each other to maintain their identity as a Eucharistic people. Consequently, great and deliberate steps were taken to provide this formation. BCCs resulted. Liturgy is an important part of the life of these BCCs.

Probably the most frequently celebrated portion of liturgical life for BCCs is its small group prayer life. Typically this is a time of reflection on Bible passages and themes. It includes songs and intercessory prayer and some discussion of the practical application of the reading.

Another slice of the liturgical life of the BCC is the Liturgy of the Word. This is often celebrated on Sundays, Holy Days, and major feasts when it is not possible to have a Eucharistic liturgy. These services are led either by a deacon or laity, whoever is recognized as gifted in presiding. These gatherings are held in chapels and meeting halls and bring together many BCCs. At times they may correspond to broadcasts of the liturgy on radio or television.



A development of this is a celebration of the Lord's Supper without an ordained presider. Leonardo Boff provides a sample text of such a service in Ecclesiogenesis. The text is noted as coming from a diocesan pastoral team in Brazil.<sup>35</sup> It is not an unusual happening, but one which expresses the desire of the people for the Eucharist.

Naturally, the pre-eminent liturgy is the Eucharistic liturgy. The document of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM III) in Puebla, Mexico, 1979, declares this to be true when it draws on the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy:

The Eucharistic celebration, the center of the sacramental life of the Church and the fullest presence of Christ in humanity, is the center and summit of the whole sacramental life.... No pastoral activity can be carried out without reference to the liturgy.<sup>36</sup>

But the same document admits Eucharist is not all it could be for the people. A tension between evangelization and sacramentalization is named as the crux of the problem. It seems that the evangelizing character of the liturgy is often lost because the liturgical formation of priests is inadequate. Hence the task of evangelization can easily appear to be opposed to the task of sacramental celebration.<sup>37</sup>

Practically speaking, the Eucharistic liturgy is celebrated only infrequently in most places due to "the lack of ministers, the scattered population, and the geographical situation."<sup>38</sup> Boff

would add to this list of causes the Church discipline regarding who may be ordained.<sup>39</sup>

When Eucharist is celebrated, it often includes Baptisms or Confirmations. It draws together people from the area and many BCCs. It realizes the preparation and catechesis done in the weekly meetings. It carries the communities beyond their usual worship. Basically, it is a celebration which has the characteristics of the summit.

The development of the BCCs as the "living cells" in the Body of Christ, in the parish, has strengthened the Church of Latin America. It has also deepened the experience of liturgy as summit because the Eucharistic celebration remains infrequent but the Eucharistic community is more bonded. That is to say, although they may not celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy any more frequently, their identity as a Eucharistic community is much stronger for the energy they spend on developing the life as a community. They are a tighter knit group when they do come to Mass and the Eucharist has much to gather and ratify in them.

## CHAPTER V

### WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICAN EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITIES?

The best way to begin to pull this together is to recap the shifts in the North and South American Church from the past 25-30 years which have been discussed.

In the United States, the Church has experienced much change over the course of just 25-30 years. I have been concerned with how change has been experienced in parishes. One noticeable shift is from being primarily a comprehensive, insulated community of the city to being a spiritual community in the suburbs. Much less emphasis is placed on keeping ourselves separate from others. And, in most places, the social life of the community is not as important as it once was.

Another major change is in the liturgical life of the new communities. The reform of the Eucharistic liturgy has allowed more people to participate in ministerial roles in parish worship than ever before. It has also captured the full attention of parishioners in the assembly by facing them, speaking in their own language, and involving them more in congregational singing. It is perhaps the most noticeable change of 25-30 years.

The result of both of these changes for the Eucharistic community has been the emphasis on Eucharist as fount. Catholics come to their parishes expecting Eucharist so as to be fed for the week.

In Latin America, the Church has also experienced much change. The story of a humble woman bemoaning the lack of a Christmas Mass for Catholics, while the Protestants had services, is always linked to the development of BCCs begun by Dom Agnelo in Brazil. The pastoral plan to train lay leaders and catechists for the formation of small communities has taken off all over Latin America.

When the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM II) met in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, ten years were already invested in small community life. In fact, the final document from this conference asserted that these communities were the nucleus of the Church in Latin America.<sup>1</sup> (Certainly this is emphasized by such events as four national gatherings of the BCCs in Brazil.)<sup>2</sup>

When the Third General Conference (CELAM III) was convened in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979, it seemed that the deck had been stacked against BCCs (and Liberation Theology) by the Conference's General Secretary, Bishop Trujillo. However, the final document again describes the BCC as the basic cell of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

This growth of BCCs is a profound change. Parishes have been redefined. Gatherings of the Eucharistic community are now much

more frequent. And leadership is not confined to the presence of ordained clergy.

For Eucharistic communities, the result of this change has been the emphasis on Eucharist as summit. Especially by encouraging the regular study of Scripture, the Liturgy of the Word becomes "extended." Catholics come to their communities expecting to appropriate the Gospel; they come to their parishes expecting their appropriation to be ratified.

While the Church in the United States and Latin America has grown significantly in the last 25-30 years, both are lopsided in their Eucharistic life. Each has recognized, in various ways, the need for what the other has, but has not necessarily put it in the context of "Eucharist."

For example, in the United States, the National Federation of Priests' Councils published a handbook entitled Basic Christian Communities: The United States Experience in 1979. This document describes what some parishes in the United States are doing to introduce small groups into their life. The range is from neighborhood groups to RENEW groups to the Christian Family Movement.

Another U.S. example is "Theology in the Americas: 1975," a conference on liberation theology held in Detroit. It gathered 25 trained and active theologians from Latin America with 175 diverse people (including some theologians) from the United States and let them discuss how to do theology.<sup>4</sup>

Both of these demonstrate an interest in the growth of the Latin American church and how that might influence the growth of the church in the United States. And yet neither of these takes Eucharist as a focal point. The first focused specifically on the life of BCCs. The second focused specifically on theological method and the view of the world from the eyes of the oppressed. The account of the second includes a description of the importance of the dialogue of various interest groups pointing out missing components in another group, and still Eucharist is bypassed. So the need of the U.S. church for what the Latin American church has, has been felt, but it has not been framed in light of Eucharist.

The primary example from Latin America is contained in the final document from Puebla (1979). Particularly in paragraphs 896-903, 916-931, and 938-951, the bishops discuss the need for liturgical reform. They speak of the present situation as lacking full and active participation of the assembly, as utilizing clergy without sufficient liturgical formation, and as inadequate in the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. They strongly desire liturgical catechesis and clarification of the roles of evangelization and sacraments for their people.

Clearly, both North and South Americans have an awareness of the deficiencies in their present situations. Unfortunately, the deficiency we experience has not been articulated primarily as a problem in our understanding and practice of Eucharist, but as cultural issues, theological methods, and political questions. As

Catholics who have saved the sacraments through every threat, it would hurt too much to admit we have a problem: We have not sufficiently explored and utilized our own Eucharistic images of summit and fount. Eucharist is not as close to us as we think.

Gustavo Gutierrez in A Theology of Liberation provides material for this argument. In one section he speaks of the great conflict within the Christian community created by the polarization of oppressed-oppressor, tortured-torturer. He goes on to say, "Participation in the Eucharist.... as it is celebrated today, appears to many to be an action which, for want of the support of an authentic community, becomes an exercise in make-believe."<sup>5</sup>

By this statement, Gutierrez betrays a one-sided experience and understanding of Eucharist. He expects the community to be in communion before it comes to Eucharist. He does not expect Eucharist to repair a community which is divided because it is somehow lacking in its present celebration.

Later he places Eucharist within the Vatican II framework of the Church as the sacrament of salvation. At first, it seems he will balance his previous understanding. He says:

The place of the mission of the Church is where the celebration of the Lord's supper and the creation of human brotherhood are indissolubly joined. This is what it means in an active and concrete way to be the sacrament of the salvation of the world.<sup>6</sup>

But then he seals his understanding with:

In the Eucharist we celebrate the cross and the resurrection of Christ, his Passover from death to life, and our passing from sin to grace.... Liberation from sin is at the very root of political liberation. The former reveals what is really in-

volved in the latter. But on the other hand, communion with God and others presupposes the abolition of all injustice and exploitation.<sup>7</sup>

Further discussion reveals this is generally the thrust of his understanding of Eucharist. It is reliant on "true brotherhood" which must come before worship. This view can be dovetailed with the image of Eucharist as summit, but does not do well with fount.

In some ways, it is unfair to pick on Gutierrez when he raises such important issues about the relationship of Eucharist and reconciliation. However, I do not believe he can satisfactorily solve the rifts in his community with a one-sided view of Eucharist. I would not presume to know how liturgical reform needs to occur in his community, but it is clear it must occur. (By his own admission, the celebration of Eucharist as it is now is not enough.)<sup>8</sup> And I believe the key to the reform they need is a greater appreciation and use of Eucharist as fount.

The relationship of summit to fount (or fount to summit) is like a complementary color scheme. In such a schema, colors which are opposite to each other on the color wheel are used to create a strong, clear picture. In a painting or drawing using a complementary scheme, one color may seem dominant, but it does not work alone. It relies on the highlights and interaction of its opposite. Similarly, in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, summit and fount are not set up as one summary image but two images playing with each other.



It is the nature of the color wheel that opposites will always be a primary and secondary color or secondary and tertiary color. For example, blue is opposite orange: blue is primary, orange is secondary. If you will, in the case of Eucharistic communities in the United States, our color is "fount." In Latin America, the color is "summit." These colors are opposites on the color wheel. (Since we can not see the entire color wheel, we each think we are the primary color from which others are made!)

Certainly, it is possible to create satisfying art with other kinds of color schemes but they create different problems for the artist. And even within a piece which employs many colors, opposites will be used to "bring each other out." As it is, the Council has told us what kind of color scheme it would like us to use. Now we have to work it out in our local situation.

Hence, the relationship between North and South American Eucharistic communities is complementary. Our Eucharistic communities can recover from their current lopsidedness only by taking deliberate steps to learn from their counterparts. These steps must be taken as Eucharistic steps. The cultural issues, theological methodologies, and political problems cannot fall in place until Eucharist is taken seriously as the center of Christian life. Eucharist cannot be relegated to a secondary issue.

It is only when the images of summit and fount are both employed that our Eucharistic communities can in any way claim to fulfill the Vatican II understanding of Eucharist. So far, we have

each made noble efforts on one part of the understanding, but we haven't gone far enough. We have stopped at the directives or the difficulties instead of focusing on the vision. When we do balance our understanding and our practice of summit and fount, the transforming power of the Eucharist will explode as the liberating force we all need.

## ENDNOTES

### NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. Colin Bell and Howard Newby, Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community (New York and Washington, Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp.23-25.
2. *ibid.*, pp.25-26.
3. *ibid.*, p.47.
4. *ibid.*, pp.26-27. This section summarizes the work of Parsons and Shils. A later edition of Parsons' work (1967) includes several diagrams and charts demonstrating the inner workings of the components of these continua.
5. Randall Stokes, Introduction to Sociology (Dubuque, Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1984), pp.121-132.
6. Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, "The Structure of Community: Toward Forming the Parish As a Community of Faith," The Parish in Community and Ministry (New York, Paulist Press, 1978), pp.41-42.
7. Philip J. Murnion, "The Parish as Source of Community and Identity," The Parish in Community and Ministry (New York, Paulist Press, 1978), p.103.
8. Dennis J. Geaney, Quest for Community: Tomorrow's Parish Today (Notre Dame, Ave Maria Press, 1987), p. 27.
9. *ibid.*, p.21.
10. *ibid.*, pp.9-27.
11. Bernard J. Lee, "The Eucharist and Intentional Christian Communities," The Eucharist, Alternative Futures for Worship, vol. 3, (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1987), p. 12.
12. John C. Haughey, "The Eucharist and Intentional Communities," The Eucharist, Alternative Futures, vol. 3, (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1987), pp.76-77.
13. Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism (San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), p.580.
14. *ibid.*, pp.712-13.

15. *ibid.*, p.891.

#### NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1. Walter M. Abbott, ed., Joseph Gallagher, trans. ed., "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," The Documents of Vatican II (New York, The America Press, 1966), #1 para.2.
2. Austin P. Flannery, ed., "Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery," Vatican II: Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975 and 1984), #3.a para.3.
3. Mark Searle, Liturgy Made Simple (Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1981), p.34.
4. Abbott, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," Vatican II, #26-32.
5. *ibid.*, #7.
6. *ibid.*, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," #3 para.1, and "Sacred Liturgy," #3, #10 para.2.
7. *ibid.*, "Constitution on the Church," #11.
8. *ibid.*, "Apostolate of the Laity," #3.
9. *ibid.*, #2, #8-13.
10. *ibid.*, "Sacred Liturgy," #10.
11. Robert Frost, "The Mountain," A Pocket Book of Robert Frost's Poems, with an introduction and commentary by Louis Untermeyer (New York, Washington Square Press, Inc., 1962), pp.97-101.
12. Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings, with a Foreword by W. H. Auden, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), pp.5,7.
13. Wilfrid Harrington, Mark, New Testament Message, vol.4 (Wilmington, DE, Michael Glazier, 1979), pp.134-138.

#### NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

1. Casiano Floristan, The Parish-- Eucharistic Community (Notre Dame, Fides Publishers, Inc., 1964), p.69.
2. *ibid.*, p.17.

3. *ibid.*, p.18.
4. *ibid.*, pp.20-21.
5. *ibid.*, pp.26-42.
6. *ibid.*, pp.43-53.
7. David C. Leege and Joseph Germillion, ed., The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame, Dec., 1984-Mar., 1989).
8. *ibid.*, 2 (Feb., 1985): 8.
9. Murnion, "Source of Community and Identity," pp.104-117.
10. John H. Westerhoff, "Celebrating and Living the Eucharist," The Eucharist, Alternative Futures, vol.3 (Collegetown, The Liturgical Press, 1987), pp.18-25.
11. *ibid.*, p.20.
12. Leege and Germillion, Catholic Parish Life. This paragraph summarizes material from several reports: 11 (Oct., 1987): 10-11; 2 (Feb., 1985): 4; 8 (Jul., 1986): 2; 4 (Jun., 1985): 7-8; 3 (Apr., 1985): 7; 5 (Aug., 1985): 1.
13. *ibid.*, 1 (Dec., 1984): 6.
14. *ibid.*, p.7.
15. *ibid.*, p.6.
16. *ibid.*, p.7.
17. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, Thirty Years of Liturgical Renewal (Washington, DC, United States Catholic Conference, 1987). This historical section is a synopsis of the discussion of pp.3-15.
18. Leege and Germillion, Catholic Parish Life, 1 (Dec., 1984): 7.
19. *ibid.*, 5 (Aug., 1985): 5.
20. *ibid.*, 6 (Dec., 1985): 6.
21. National Federation of Priests' Councils, Basic Christian Communities: The United States Experience, Introduction by David Killian (Chicago, NFPC, 1979), p.1.

22. *ibid.*
23. Leonardo Boff, EcclesioGenesis (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1986), p.3.
24. *ibid.*, p.4.
25. Alvaro Barreiro, Basic Ecclesial Communities: The Evangelization of the Poor (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1982), pp.8,13.
26. Leonardo Boff, "Theological Characteristics of a Grassroots Church," The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1981), pp.132-143.
27. Harvey Cox, Religion in the Secular City (New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1984), p.109.
28. *ibid.*, p.110.
29. Boff, "Theological Characteristics," pp.135-6.
30. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" (Rome, 6 August 1984), Sections IV, VIII, IX.
31. Boff, "Theological Characteristics," pp.136-7.
32. Arthur McGovern, "Liberation Theology in Actual Practice," Commonweal, 110 (28 Jan. 83): 46-9.
33. John Welsh, "Comunidades Eclesiais de Base: A New Way to be Church," America, 8 February 1986, pp.85-88.
34. Abbott, "Apostolate of the Laity," #7, 13, 14.
35. Boff, EcclesioGenesis, pp.73-75.
36. John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, ed., "The Final Document", Puebla and Beyond, Documentation and Commentary (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1979), #923, 927.
37. *ibid.*, #901-3.
38. *ibid.*, #900.
39. Boff, EcclesioGenesis, pp.61-73, 76-97. These sections address the problem of gifted presiders in hungry communities who cannot celebrate Eucharist in the Church's ritual because they are not eligible for ordination. Their ineligibility may stem from marital status or gender.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER V

1. Medellín Document on "Joint Patoral Planning", #10, cited in Barreiro, Basic Ecclesial Communities, p.70.
2. Barreiro, Basic Ecclesial Communities, pp.xii, 2.
3. Eagleson and Scharper, "Final Document", #641.
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5. Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1973), p.137.
6. *ibid.*, p.262.
7. *ibid.*, p.263.
8. *ibid.*, p.265.

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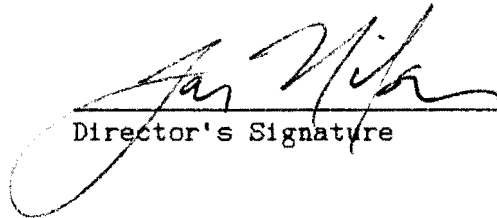
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