

THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LITURGY OF THE NEW COVENANT

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In this paper I want to unfold and explore the dynamic of the Word of God in the liturgy of the new covenant—in the Mass in particular. I mean not only the Word as narrative proclamation, but the Word as memorial and invocation, remembrance and salvific encounter, in which the believer participates in the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of God's life revealed in Scripture and accomplished and actualized in the liturgy.

It is in the liturgy that we see that Scripture is not so much a book as a living Word from God, a Word which, when announced in the assembly, defines the very event that is underway. It is God's intervention and offer of salvation in the here and now of a particular gathering of believers.

The Word of God has a dynamic toward sacrament; that is, its proclamation in an assembly of believers becomes a communication of salvation for those who hear it, an event of salvation. This event is not simply so many words pronounced and heard—the words find expression in signs and gestures and actions, all of which reveal the deepest mystery which the words contain.

Proclaimed in the Eucharistic liturgy, the Scriptures reveal their deepest mystery in bread and wine exchanged by people who play different roles in the assembly, such that it becomes manifest that the whole cosmos and the whole of history are destined for transformation in the Spirit of the risen Lord. This transformation, which makes present the risen Lord's paschal sacrifice, and the communion which offers the participants a share in it, are a very concrete, ecclesial locus of revelation. Here do we have that of which *Dei Verbum* speaks: we participate in the divine nature, having access to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹

Han Urs von Balthasar observed that as the life of Jesus progresses two things stand out: The Word becomes more and more flesh, and the flesh becomes more and more Word.² By the first, he means that to the abstract nature of the commands of the Law and the prophets Jesus

¹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965), no. 2.

² H. Urs von Balthasar, "The Word, Scripture and Tradition," in *Explorations in Theology, I: The Word Made Flesh*, trans. A.V. Littledate and A. Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 13.

imparts a divine, factual presence. By the second, he is noting that Jesus increasingly unifies the scriptural words in himself, making his earthly life the perfect expression of all the earlier revelations of God.

This idea can be extended in terms less immediately scriptural, that is, ontologically: The eternal Word, entirely in all that he is, becomes more and more flesh. And all that is flesh is transformed more and more into all that the Word is. I want to suggest that this is the very dynamic that the liturgy reveals, the very dynamic in which the liturgy consists. If Word becoming flesh and flesh becoming Word is what may be called the form or shape of salvation in history, it may also be said that the liturgy takes that same form or shape.

The ‘Sacramentality’ of Revelation

Salvatore Marsili made a similar observation in his reflections on the “sacramentality of revelation.”³ This sacramentality is discovered by reflecting on the shape and scope of revelation. Sacramentality emerges as a necessary dimension because God’s revelation is communication with human, embodied beings. It is *participation* and this cannot be realized except through a sacramental economy. This claim can be made because liturgy is actualization of the Word in the very assembly where it is proclaimed. Yet this Word cannot be actualized unless it achieves its sacramental dimensions. The Word—as word—proclaims all that Christ was and did in his earthly existence.

That Word is seen as a sacramental phenomenon when the event which the words proclaim converges with the sacramental rite that represents it. Thus the Word becomes the event of salvation in the midst of the celebrating assembly.

It is useful to connect what Marsili is saying here with *Dei Verbum*’s by now classic statement concerning the relationship between the actual words of the scriptural text and the events of salvation history: “This economy of revelation is realized by deeds and words, which are intrinsically bound up with each other. As a result, the works performed by God in the history of salvation show forth and bear out the doctrine and realities signified by the words; the words, for their part, proclaim the works, and bring to light the mystery they contain.”⁴

³ S. Marsili, “Teologia liturgica,” in *Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*, eds. D. Sartore and A. M. Triacca (Rome: Paoline, 1984), 1508-1525.

⁴ *Dei Verbum*, no. 2.

A similar dynamic and one rooted in this, is at work in the liturgy. The words of the Scripture not only proclaim the *events* of salvation history and the mystery contained in these.⁵ When these words are proclaimed in the liturgy, they also proclaim the *event* of the sacramental celebration, which is that same *event* of salvation history, actualized here and now. Put more simply perhaps: what Scripture proclaims becomes sacrament.

In fact, when we look at the shape of the Eucharistic liturgy, it is this very form that can be discerned. We are accustomed to this. We speak of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. But now it becomes clear that this is not an arbitrary arrangement. It is liturgy in the same detailed form of salvation itself: words becoming sacrament, words rooted in events. And the reason why liturgy is in this form is because it is nothing less than the same thing. It is salvation history—that is, it is Word becoming sacrament.⁶

In the Liturgy of the Word, the Scriptures are read in a certain order, an order that follows the order of salvation history. That is, the liturgy begins with a text from the Old Testament and moves toward the climax of the proclamation of the gospel. This is the order of the Liturgy of the Word, because the gospel is the climax and center of the Scripture; or put more comprehensively: because Christ himself is the fulfillment of the history of Israel. Thus, for a Christian, only from the perspective of the gospel is the Old Testament text understood in its fullness, or again: only in Christ is the history of Israel understood. Some reading from the writings of the apostles forms a link between gospel and Old Testament, a contemplative insight, a theological insight that helps bind the event of the gospel to the event of the Old Testament.⁷

⁵ The Latin here uses *mysterium*. Doing so, the document makes use of the more ample understanding of *mysterium*, which in patristic usage referred first to the deepest sense of the Scriptures and thus by extension to the liturgical celebrations of baptism and Eucharist. The sacramental dimensions of this word may not have been intentional in the mind of the Council Fathers of Vatican II, but the use of the word here is fortuitous, for it allows us to extend the thought to liturgical celebrations, as would have been natural in patristic thought.

⁶ In what follows I am much indebted to a number of studies which have influenced me in a general way and which, for this reason, it will not be possible to cite specifically, except occasionally. In addition to S. Marsili and H.U. von Balthasar, cited above, I rely here on the following: Rino Fisichella and R. Latourelle, eds., *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1994); Ghislain Lafont, *God, Time and Being*, trans. L. Maluf (Petersham: St. Bede's, 1992); J. Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship* (New York: Paulist, 1988); P. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church, Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995); J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1985).

⁷ I am not speaking here necessarily of specific sets of texts as found in the Lectionary for the celebration of a given day, where this connection is sometimes more, sometimes less clear, as the case may be. The point is a general one about this structure in the liturgy. However, once the theological significance of this structure is grasped, as well as the sacramental (hear *mystery*) economy to which it is referring, profound and unexpected connections can emerge between the texts that will not appear when the texts are simply read side by side as texts.

Why is the gospel the center of this part of the liturgy? How can this claim be made? On a most basic level, exegesis itself leads us to make such a claim. When one has finished with all the exercises that divide the Scriptures up into various pericopes and redactions, and if there still remains some energy to try to put them back together again, it is not difficult to see that the Scriptures as a whole lead to a center.

There is a center already to the Old Testament, even though it represents a host of theological traditions developed during well over a thousand years. Everything is organized around the exodus, the wandering in the desert, the coming into the promised land. All things either lead to that, recount that, or look back to that. The whole of revelation for Israel is focused in what God manifested himself to be in these events. Every subsequent generation remembered and celebrated them, defined its present dealings with God in reference to them.

The New Testament functions within this thought world. It continues the sort of reading of the Scriptures that was already well established there, and it discerns in them—in the exodus, the desert, the promised land—the foreshadowing and indeed some hint of explanation for the wonderful events that unfolded in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus becomes a new center for such readers, and the texts of the New Testament are the written evidence of their way of reading the Old.

Jesus may be said to be a new center of the history of Israel. But his own life also has a center. The gospels, especially, lead us toward this center. A German exegete in the first part of the twentieth century said the gospels are passion narratives with long introductions.⁸ This is well said.

If we look at the kerygma of the primitive Church as represented in somebody like St. Paul, we can see a situation that did not yet feel the need of something like the gospel genre. Paul preached only the death and resurrection of Jesus, and he managed to preach the gospel without reference to the many words, parables, and miracles of Jesus, not to mention the details of his birth. In other circumstances and as the years passed, communities felt the need for a more extended narrative of the life of Jesus. In the case of Matthew and Luke this need reaches back to the very origins and birth of Jesus.

But in every case whatever was narrated about Jesus—be it the marvelous details surrounding his birth, be it the words and deeds of his active ministry—had as its purpose placing the mystery of his passion in its fuller context, a center which a preacher like Paul could never let us lose sight of. The four gospels all lead clearly to this center, to the passion. The other writings of the New Testament unfold the consequences of such a

⁸ Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (1896; reprint, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 80, n. 11.

center, showing in various ways that the believer is summoned to share in the Lord's passion and so in his victory.

The 'Event' of Christ

The liturgical celebration of the Word reveals something deeper about this center of revelation that we find in the New Testament. The "event" of Christ—in whom all the other events of Israel and indeed of all the world find their center and fulfillment—is revealed as "an hour which does not pass away."⁹ Thus the Scripture which proclaims Christ, is doing nothing less than announcing and manifesting this hour (more specifically, some detail, some particular scene in this hour) as being the very hour of the liturgy itself.

Marsili stresses the event character of liturgy. Liturgy is an event in the same sense as all other events in the economy of salvation—the intervention of the living God in human history, which, precisely because it is God's doing, cannot slip into the past. In a given liturgy, specific words from the Scripture are proclaimed, as *Dei Verbum* states: "the words, for their part, proclaim the works, and bring to light the mystery they contain."¹⁰

The expression "the mystery they contain" deserves close attention. This mystery includes the power of the Word of God in every moment to be received anew as an actual communication of salvation. Every proclamation of the Word in the liturgy is a moment irreducibly new: the event of Christ (all the events of Scripture are the event of Christ) becomes the event of the Church. That is to say, the Word-event of Christ becomes the event of the assembly that here and now hears this Word. The Word proclaimed in liturgy is not some pale reflection or residue of the event proclaimed there. It is the whole reality to which the words bear testimony made present.

The most complete example of what is being claimed here is found in the Liturgy of the Word at the Easter Vigil. Seven long readings of the Old Testament climax in the gospel which announces Christ risen. The liturgy is the actualization of these words for the particular assembly that hears them. This is to say: The event of that liturgy is everything that the Scriptures proclaim—creation, exodus, exile, and restoration—culminating in Christ's resurrection in that assembly.¹¹ The particular assembly is the place, the time, the people, the moment in history in which Christ is risen.

⁹ On this expression, see the precise and compact formulation in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1085.

¹⁰ *Dei Verbum*, no. 2.

¹¹ Such a context, created by the proclamation of the Word, is the context for the celebration of Baptism and the Eucharist that follows, that is, in the expression of von Balthasar—the Word becoming more and more flesh. Baptism and Eucharist as celebrated at the Easter Vigil offer a separate opportunity for the kind of discussion we are conducting here. I do not pursue it at this point so as not to lose the thread of this more general discussion of Word and Eucharist.

None of these claims about the power of the Word could be made were it not for the action of the Holy Spirit, whose gift and creation the Scriptures are and whose inspiration is needed to understand them aright.¹² Put another way, the risen Lord himself must open our minds in the Spirit to the understanding of those words. When he does, our minds grasp nothing less than the wonderful reality that this moment of listening becomes in the very hearing an event of salvation, the same event that the words proclaim.

The exodus of Israel out of Egypt is the “exodus” of Jesus from this world to his Father, and every believer discovers in penetrating the meaning of the Scriptures that he or she too is living this one and only exodus. The many events of the Scriptures are parts of one event: Jesus Christ, and him crucified and risen in his Church, in each believer.¹³ This is the one and only center of the Scriptures. It is an hour which does not pass. The reading of the Word in the liturgy manifests this reality in the midst of the believing assembly, in the depths of our hearts.

Between Remembrance and Invocation

In the Eucharistic liturgy, the Spirit who writes the Scriptures now brings those Scriptures forward to become flesh, to become Sacrament. To explore this dimension of the liturgy, I want to focus on the elements of *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*. These are technical terms which in their strictest application name parts of the *anaphora*, or Eucharistic Prayer.

Anamnesis is a celebrative narration and remembering of the events of Christ’s paschal mystery—his death, resurrection, ascension, his coming again in glory—and an offering of these to the Father. But a dimension of anamnesis pervades the whole celebration: It is all remembering, and in the festive setting the remembered past is rendered present in mystery and becomes the event which the assembly enacts and participates in.

Within the liturgy, epiclesis is the invocation of the Father that he send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts for their transformation and that the Spirit fill those who receive the gifts. None of what is believed to happen during the rite would be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit. If in anamnesis concrete events from the past are recalled in a festive narration,

¹² On the intimate relation between Christ the Word and the Scriptures as Word of the Spirit, see von Balthasar, “The Word, Scripture, and Tradition,” 15-16.

¹³ Herein lies the pattern and the task for the homily, an indispensable dimension of the Liturgy of the Word. One of the ordained, who by his ordination functions in that moment as a sacrament of the apostolic tradition apart from which the Scriptures cannot be understood, must make these connections explicit for the particular assembly in its concrete circumstances: exodus of Israel, exodus of Jesus, exodus of us all.

in the epiclesis the view moves beyond the limits of a strict chronology and understands the event of the liturgy also as a visit from the future. The risen Christ already stands in that definitive future in which he is established by his glorification, and through him the Spirit descends from that future in a new Pentecost upon the worshipping assembly and makes it to be one Body, one Spirit, in him.

Anamnesis and epiclesis are most fruitfully understood together, as distinguishable and yet inextricably intertwined. They are the fundamental ritual shapes in which the believing community encounters the God who reveals himself. The Christian understanding of anamnesis is rooted in the Old Testament notion of a *memorial*, captured in the verse from the Psalm, "The Lord has made a memorial for his wonders" (Ps. 111:4).

The great events of Israel's history, when narrated in a feast, become contemporary to the hearers, to those celebrating the feast. Other cultures believed that by the festive narration of primordial origins they could thereby be brought again within the realm of cosmic purity and power. It was Israel's unique belief that something similar could happen regarding actual events from its history.

This belief flows from Israel's understanding that the very events of her history were a word of God to her, and as such, that word could not grow old or stale or weaker or lose its effect. "The Word of the LORD remains forever" (see Isa. 40: 8). Thus, it was enough to repeat the words which narrated the events to bring each new generation of Israelites into participation with the originating events of the community.¹⁴

This is especially clear in the celebration of Passover. We see in the Passover that when we say "narrate events" we mean far more than a thin monotone of words pronounced aloud. We mean a narrative in which words are surrounded by gestures and signs and indeed an entire elaborate meal in a particular place and with particular people. And in the context of that narrative, recounted in this precise way on this particular night, the question inevitably arises: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The answer can be given that by remembering Israel's Passover from Egypt those who remember thereby "pass over" from Egypt with her. Indeed, this defines an Israelite—one becomes such by celebrating the feast.¹⁵

This (and the other feasts commemorating other events recorded in the Old Testament) are the memorial of the Lord's wonders that he has given Israel. And it is significant that this *is given by the Lord*. It is he who has worked the wonderful deeds, and it is he who makes it possible to celebrate them in such a feast. The primordial events which found the community and in which each subsequent generation shares by participation

¹⁴ This unique Old Testament understanding of the nature of a feast is classically described in G. von Rad, *Theologie des alten Testaments*, 2 vols. (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1958-1966), 2:108-133.

¹⁵ See Exod. 12:26-27; 13:8, 14-15; Deut. 6:20-25; and the contemporary ritual of the Jewish Passover.

are not events produced and generated by the community's ingenuity, any more than the memorial feast is such. Both are received realities, which the community gratefully accepts as gifts from God.

Jesus, the Jew, draws on all these notions the night before he dies when, in the context of the Passover meal¹⁶ he consciously and intentionally summarizes or recapitulates all of Israel's history in himself. In the signs of the meal which he selects, he is conscious that he holds all of Israel and all her history in his hands as he takes up the bread and wine. He identifies that whole history with himself and with the death he will undergo on the morrow, saying over these elements: "This is my body, this is my blood."

The Fulfillment of Israel's History

This moment, this action, is unfathomably profound. This is not some vague identification of Israel's history with the story of Jesus. It is a sign unmistakable in its significance: Israel's history finds its fulfillment in the body that will hang on the cross, in the blood that will be shed there. This blood opens a new covenant, "the new covenant in my blood." And it is precisely in the context of these signs and their transformation that we receive Jesus' command, "Do this in memory (anamnesis) of me" (see Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:25).

With this command the psalm verse, "The LORD has made a memorial for his wonders," shifts into its definitive christological key. And indeed, the Church slowly came to realize that the riches contained for her by being obedient to this command would be boundless. For this meal, repeated as received—again, not as invented by the ingenuity of the community—in each subsequent generation, would be the context in which the Lord's promise about the Holy Spirit would be fulfilled: "He will lead you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

We learn something here about truth and how it is received: For Christians, truth is not a proposition, a *gnosis*. It is a somebody, a person: Jesus Christ. And it is not he in some static form but he in the action of his dying and rising. This is truth and this is life (John 14:6). And how do we know so? It is revealed to us by the experience of Eucharist, by repeating what the Lord himself gave us to do.

¹⁶ We can prescind from the debates among exegetes, arising from the difference between the synoptics and John on this point, about whether or not the historical Last Supper was actually a Passover celebration. The tradition represented in the relevant New Testament texts and the tradition of reading those texts all closely associate Jesus' Last Supper with the theological meaning of Passover. This is the relevant point here.

The Eucharist is a memorial of the supper on the night before Jesus died, but this supper pointed to the meaning of the cross, whose meaning is finally revealed in the resurrection and the rest of the unfolding of the paschal mystery. Thus to remember the supper, which by foreshadowing his death already was swept up in its hour (into the “ontology” of that hour), is our way of remembering his death. For the supper now “re-shadows” for us that hour and is thereby swept up into it. Henceforth, all memorial, all anamnesis refers to this central event of salvation history. All remembering is ultimately a remembering of this.

The risen presence of the Crucified One is the eternally present fact of the new creation, the new covenant. In his resurrection all death—and so all the past—is swallowed up. The “technique” of memorial splices us into this *fact*.¹⁷ This fact is also a future, for the resurrection contains as part of its very logic not only the defeat of past death but likewise of all death and all time subsequent to the historical moment of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, celebrating the meal as a memorial is a remembering oriented toward the future.

Although the Lord’s command at the Last Supper rivets the Church’s attention on the Eucharistic dimensions of anamnesis, it is not difficult to see in a general way the anamnestic dimensions of all liturgy. To call the liturgical proclamation of the Word of God “anamnesis,” as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does,¹⁸ is to claim that this proclamation inserts us into those primordial and originating events. But since the Word always has its dynamic drive toward sacrament, the sacramental action itself also is expressive—and more densely so—of this same anamnestic element.¹⁹

¹⁷ J. Zizioulas, *Eucharistia e Regno di Dio* (Magnano: Quiquajon, 1996), 15, helpfully reminds us that the Eucharistic meal not only has its historical roots in the Last Supper but also in those resurrection appearances during the forty days when the Lord ate and drank with his disciples. This is especially clear in Luke 24:30-31, but also John 21:13. That is, the risen Lord is showing himself in the signs that he made to refer to his death, most notably, in his wounds. See John 20:20,27; Luke 24:40. That this memory of the death of the Lord is not merely backward looking but in itself has an eschatological thrust is shown by Paul: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord *until he comes*” (1 Cor. 11:26).

¹⁸ *Catechism*, no. 1103.

¹⁹ All that I have said so far is well summarized in a particularly dense paragraph of the *Catechism*, no. 1085. It is too long to cite in full here, but “In the liturgy of the Church, it is principally his own paschal mystery that Christ signifies and makes present. . . . His paschal mystery is a real event that occurred in our history, but it is unique: all other historical events happen once, and then they pass away, swallowed up in the past. The paschal mystery of Christ, by contrast, cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death. . . . The event of the cross and resurrection abides and draws everything toward life.”

The most exquisite anamnesis which the Church performs is the Eucharistic narrative, and in its most narrow technical and liturgical sense the word “anamnesis” refers to that prayer which immediately follows the words of institution wherein all the dimensions of the paschal mystery are remembered. But the whole anaphora is permeated with a narrative structure, grounding the “hour” of the liturgical celebration in the “hour” of Jesus’ paschal mystery, which does not pass away.

The ‘Today’ of the Sacraments

Around the Eucharist cluster the other sacraments and indeed all the liturgy of the Church. In addition to the other sacraments we should highlight in a special way the Liturgy of the Hours and the calendar of the liturgical year. All this is memorial. All this is the *hodie*, the “today” of the feast.²⁰ Only in this *hodie* is the content of Revelation fully revealed, a content which we are easily inclined to identify too thinly simply with the Bible taken as a book. The book is a means to an end—the presence of the living Word in the midst of the believing assembly, accomplishing and extending to that assembly what has been accomplished in concrete historical events. When we celebrate a memorial of those events, those events become the event of that liturgical hour.

None of these magnificent claims of the worshipping Church would be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit, who accompanies the Son in every stage of his own work in the economy. Epiclesis is the liturgical manifestation of this indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation.

By way of basic definition: epiclesis is an invocation of the Father that he send the Holy Spirit to transform the gifts which the Church brings before him. This liturgical practice is also best understood by searching for its roots in the whole history of salvation. If there is an intimate and inextricable relation between anamnesis and epiclesis in the liturgy, it is because there is an intimate and inextricable relation between the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation.

Just as Christian anamnesis is rooted in the Old Testament notion of memorial, Christian epiclesis is rooted in the Holy Spirit’s role in the shaping of the scriptural word of the Old Testament and, more foundationally, the shaping of the events to which that word testifies. It is all this that Christians profess, in what seems at first glance a somewhat laconic expression, in the line from the creed which concerns the Spirit: “He spoke through the prophets.”

²⁰ See B. de Soos, *Le mystere liturgique d’apres Saint Leon le Grand* (Munster: Aschendorf, 1958), 22-27.

The Holy Spirit shapes all the events of Israel's history—and before that the very creation itself—in such a way that they are all “types” of Christ. The events themselves and the words that bear testimony to those events in the inspired scriptures are all mysteriously shaped so that they find fulfillment in the Son's incarnation, in his death and resurrection. They have already foreshadowed it. They have accustomed a nation to its patterns. The history of Israel illumines and clarifies these; the history of Israel is the *context* (in the fullest sense of that word) in which the eternal Word (the eternal “text”) is uttered in the flesh.

As salvation history comes to the “fullness of time,” it is the “work” of the Holy Spirit to form out of one particular human life a vessel capable of expressing the total being of God through the person of the Son. Thus, the Spirit overshadows Mary and forms the Father's Son in her womb (Luke 1:35).

And the Spirit accompanies the earthly life of Jesus through each of its phases, appearing in visible form at his Baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32), driving him into the desert to be tempted (Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1), anointing him as he inaugurates his ministry in Nazareth (Luke 4:18), enveloping him in the cloud of the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34), being breathed forth from Jesus in his death on the cross (John 19:30), raising him from the dead (Rom. 8:11), and being breathed on the apostles from his risen body (John 20:22).

When Jesus took bread and wine into his hands the night before he died, as we described it above, the moment and its possibilities had been long in preparation by the work of the Holy Spirit. “He spoke through the prophets,” that is, the whole of Israel's history had been formed in such a way that it could all converge in this moment and its meaning. The Exodus, around which Israel's entire history centers both before and after, was accomplished fact. Words of the Spirit-formed Scriptures bore testimony to it. A memorial feast given by the Lord brought each new generation of Israelites under its force. Jesus himself had celebrated the feast many times during the course of his life, as had his disciples. A history, a language, a vocabulary, a set of rituals were all in place for Jesus' use in that moment.

He takes into his hands what the Spirit had prepared for him, and over it pronounces words which the Spirit with whom he is anointed moves him to speak: “This is my body, this is my blood.” Thus, together with the Spirit, does he express his own understanding of his mission, which brings the history of Israel to fulfillment.

Thus, together with the Spirit, does he express his own willingness to pour out his life for the sake of the many. What the meal shows so magnificently and in so many layered ways—echoing with words and gestures and food thousands of years of history and the very creation of the cosmos—will be shown in the events that begin to unfold at the end of this very

meal: Jesus' arrest, his death, resurrection, ascension, and the Pentecost of the Spirit. All this the Spirit shapes into the events that are the perfectly articulated Word of the Father to sinful humanity, the life-giving Word of the Father.

The form and dynamic movements of the rites in liturgy echo the form and dynamic movement of salvation history itself, which in its own turn ultimately echoes the very form and dynamic movement of divine trinitarian love. We have seen that in its Eucharistic liturgy the Church has been faithful in the celebration of a rite given by Jesus himself in the course of his earthly existence. To be sure, such a rite did not contain an epiclesis, even if the Holy Spirit was very much involved, as we have noted. But very soon in the course of the practice of Eucharist in the various churches, some ritual expression of the Holy Spirit's indispensable action inevitably came to the fore.

We have said that the epiclesis is an invocation that the Father send the Holy Spirit to transform the gifts of the Church, in the case of the Eucharist, gifts of bread and wine. In the meal that Jesus gave to be celebrated in his memory he identified the bread and wine with himself, more specifically with the death that he would undergo on the morrow. The bread broken is his body broken on the cross. The wine poured out is his blood poured out.

These signs are meant to show that his death becomes a kind of nourishment for us. But in and of itself death cannot be a nourishment. It must be transformed, and such transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. A prayer before communion in the Latin liturgy puts this very well: "Lord Jesus Christ, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit your death brought life to the world."

This transformation of death into life-giving nourishment for the Church is nothing less than the resurrection itself. It is the Spirit who raises Jesus from the dead (see Rom. 8:11). The eternal Spirit is henceforth and forever Spirit of the risen Lord poured out on all mankind, and it is as Spirit that the risen Lord is present everywhere. The "technique" of epiclesis is a ritual means of splicing into the realm of this Spirit, not some vague Spirit but the Spirit who accomplishes for the Church in the Eucharist what was worked in the resurrection itself. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through his Spirit dwelling in you" (Rom. 8:11).

The Spirit who molded a body for the Word in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Spirit who raised the body of Jesus from the dead—this same Spirit now fills the gifts which the Church has brought and makes them to be one and the same thing: the body formed from Mary's body, the body raised from the dead. It is precisely here in the Eucharist that the

Church is constituted as the body of Christ. The body taken from Mary, the body raised from the dead, the Church as body of Christ—these are not different or separate bodies. They are one and the same. And it is not a static body. It is the body crucified and risen, which, standing at the right hand of the Father, forever offers itself to him in an hour which does not pass away. In the Spirit, death disappears, and the body of Christ, formed from the whole cosmos and the whole of history, rises alive from the tomb and passes over to the right hand of the Father.

If talk about anamnesis inevitably has about it a certain pull to the past, to a memory of the deeds of Jesus in history, then talk about epiclesis and the work of the Spirit clearly shows that “remembering Jesus” includes the paradox of remembering a future. Indeed, the Spirit pulls the weight of memory as much, if not more so, toward the future as toward the past. For there is only one way to remember Jesus crucified and to encounter him or—as the Latin tradition has long loved to consider the Eucharist—only one way to have the sacrifice of Calvary present on the altar: Jesus crucified is none other than the now risen Lord, present to us in the Spirit.

And the risen Lord, freed from the bondage of time and space, even while being present in all time and space, is already living the future which is the recapitulation of all things in himself (see Eph. 1:10). It is this Lord—“And the Lord is the Spirit!” (2 Cor. 3:17)—who is present to the Church which celebrates his memorial. If the sacrifice of Calvary can be present anywhere beyond the historical Calvary, it is because where the risen Lord is present—“And the Lord is the Spirit!”—he is present as the one once crucified there.

The epiclesis of the Eucharistic liturgy, then, is the culminating work of the Holy Spirit in the whole life of the Church. It is nonetheless important to be mindful that the other sacramental rites also have an epiclesis that is vital to understanding what each sacrament accomplishes.²¹ Likewise, although there is no explicit epiclesis in the Liturgy of the Hours or in the liturgical calendar of feasts, these have their power and force precisely through the work of the Holy Spirit. Each of the sacraments is variously ordered toward the Eucharist. In each, through the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the particular way in which that rite expresses its anamnetic or memorial dimension, there is accomplished what the sacrament intends.

What do all the other sacraments intend? Among other things, bringing the Church together for the celebration of the Eucharist. In each sacramental epiclesis there can be discerned its preparation in “the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets.” In each, too, there is some pattern

²¹ J. Corbon speaks usefully of each of the sacraments from the point of view of their epiclesis in *The Wellspring of Worship*, 108-122.

which echoes the Spirit's accompanying Jesus through the course of his earthly existence. The rite is in these same forms and patterns, which, as we have said, ultimately is patterned by the form and dynamic movement of divine trinitarian love.

Here we see in the liturgy, the final accomplishment and actualization of God's will for the world, the meaning of salvation history—that we have access to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, that we share in the trinitarian life, in the divine life of the Blessed Trinity. This is the purpose of the divine action in the history of salvation, a divine action that continues in the dynamic of the Word toward sacrament in the liturgy. God invites all people to share in the communion that God is—in the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and by this sharing to live in a new communion with one another.