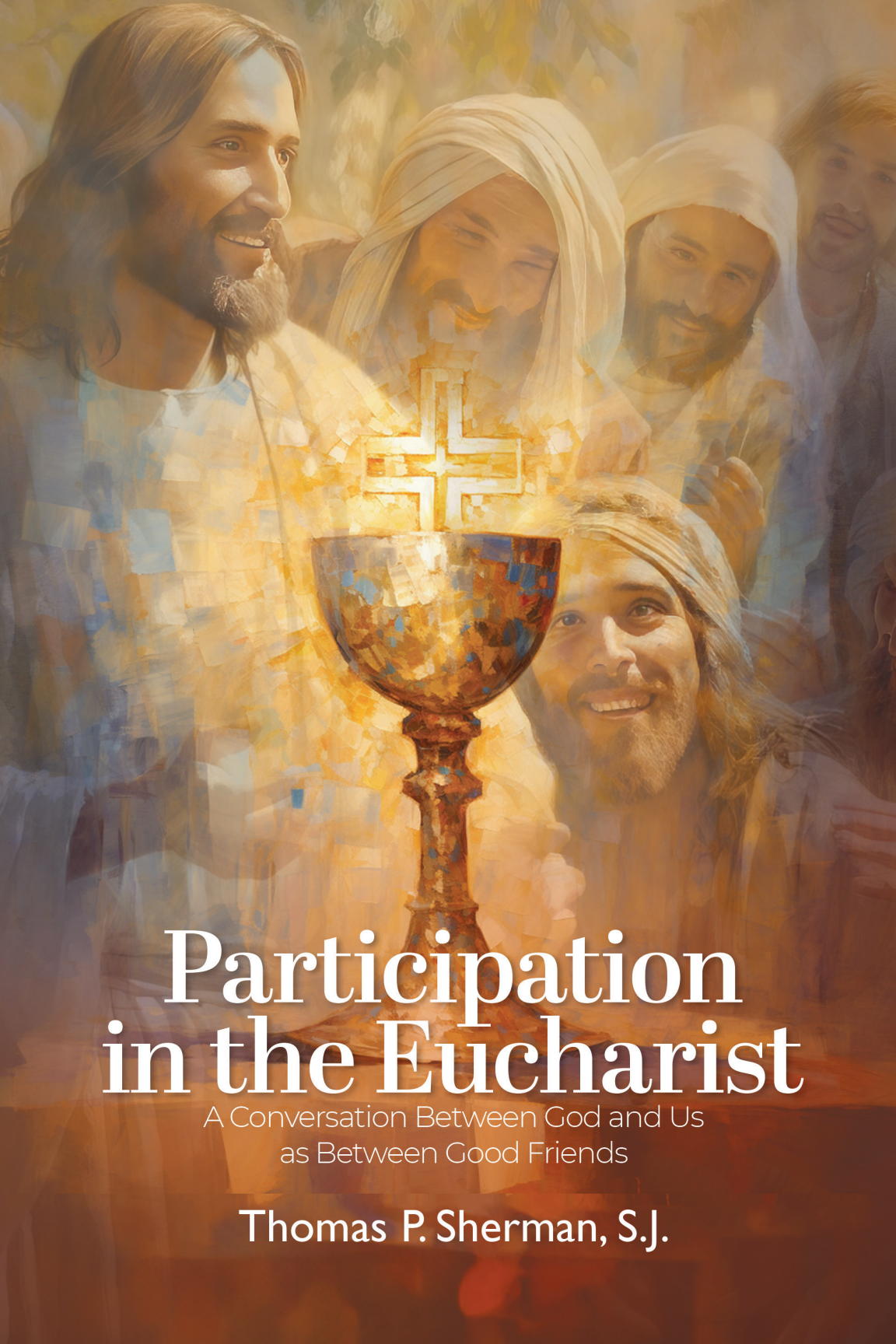


Participation in the Eucharist

A Conversation Between God and Us as Between Good Friends

Thomas P. Sherman, S.J.

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Thomas P. Sherman, S.J.

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FOREWORD

Considering the central importance of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the life of the Church and in the life of each of her members, the Second Vatican Council Fathers urged the faithful to a "fully conscious and active participation" in the celebration of the Eucharist. Years later, as a way of promoting for all the faithful greater understanding and participation in the Eucharist, the Eleventh Synod of Bishops[1] , as well as Pope Benedict XVI in *Sacramentum Caritatis* recommended a catechetical instruction for our times in the traditional form of a *mystagogy* of the Eucharist. In this essay, Fr. Sherman sketches out such a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends. As we all have some experience of friendship and we value the friends we have, we would agree that friendship is important in our lives. Indeed, we might well agree with the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics,* where he writes,

> "Without friends, none of us would choose to live,
> even if we had all the other good things in life."[2]

Friendship, a universally valued concept, serves as a gateway to understanding the intimacy of the Eucharistic encounter. Fr. Sherman

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1 XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, cf. *The Eucharist Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church* (General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops & Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004).

2 Nicomachean Ethics VIII. 1155a5

prompts reflection on the nature of friendship—a bond characterized by mutual intimacy, loyalty, and sharing. Drawing from historical accounts by influential thinkers such as Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Aelred of Rivaulx, and the contemporary Quaker philosopher John Macmurray, he unveils various dimensions of friendship.

Considered together and individually, these influential accounts of friendship are accounts of *human* friendship. But a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between *God* and *us* as between good friends must be based on a friendship that is uniquely a friendship with God. Such a friendship may be partially understood from our experience of human friendships, but only partially.

While human friendships involve physical and spiritual interaction, relating to God transcends tangible experience. Divine revelation, accepted through faith, reveals God's invitation to friendship, exemplified in Jesus Christ. Fr. Sherman explores the parallels and distinctions between human and divine friendships, highlighting the transformative nature of our relationship with God.

Fr. Sherman stresses that considering a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends, the very words we describe this conversation must be understood *analogously* to refer to the divine and the human in our friendship with God. Words such as "friendship" and "friend", "equality", "freedom", "sharing," "gift," and "conversation" will have to express both the divine and the human in proportionately different ways. As attractive as friendship may be in our lives and as appealing as a conversation between good friends may be, we have to be aware of the difference between the human and the divine in understanding such a relationship. But Jesus' invitation to us to become His friends should be our motivation in doing as best we can (with His grace) to understand and participate in the Eucharist as a conversation with Him.

In the Eucharist, the conversation between God and humanity unfolds through the sharing of what is most valued—Jesus Christ. This communion, expressed in the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of

the Eucharist, and Holy Communion, reflects a conversation initiated by God and responded to by humanity whose final realization will be in taking part in the eternal conversation of self-giving and receiving between Father and Son in their Holy Spirit.

In many Asian cultures including Filipino culture, it is very important to experience the Holy Eucharist as a conversation between God and us akin to good friends bonding. Relationships are highly valued and friendship is greatly esteemed in most Asian societies. Genuine friendships usually have the same characteristics as those connected with respect, concordance, and interdependence, which are typical of Asian cultures.

Understanding the Holy Eucharist as a conversation coincides with key Asian principles of hospitality and communal harmony. In the Philippines and in Asia, sharing meals together implies more than mere physical participation but symbolically represents comradeship, oneness, and mutual regard. The notion of the Eucharist as a conversation in the context of a shared meal is also seen as emphasizing being one in Christ's divine Real presence, making them sense that they belong to one another. Additionally, reverence for the divine and spiritual interconnectedness remains a key feature of many Asian cultures. It is, therefore, consistent with these cultural beliefs that the Eucharist should be understood as communication with God rather than mere ritualistic recitations. This viewpoint requires that individuals cultivate an individual relationship with God.

Fr. Enrico C. Eusebio SJ
President
Loyola School of Theology

ABBREVIATIONS

CCC	*Catechism of the Catholic Church*
Conf	*Confessions* (Augustine)
DV	*Dei Verbum* [Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation]
Ep	*Epistles* (Augustine)
GIRM	*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*
MD	*Mediator Dei* (Pius XII)
Meta	*Metaphysica* (Aristotle)
NE	*Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle)
SC	*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy]
SpEx	*Spiritual Exercises* (Ignatius of Loyola)
ST	*Summa Theologiae* (Thomas Aquinas)

All Biblical citations are taken from the New American Bible published by the Catholic Biblical Association of America (1969).

All citations of DS [Denzinger-Schönmetzer] section numbers refer to the 2003 edition of H. Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (edited by P. Hünermann [Bologna: Edizione Dehoniane]).

INTRODUCTION

The Call to Active Participation in the Eucharistic Celebration and Christian Spirituality

In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the document of the Second Vatican Council on the liturgy, the Council Fathers variously describe the liturgy, and especially the sacrifice of the Eucharist, as

> the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church … [the] action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church … a sacred action surpassing all others … the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows.[1]

Because of the supreme importance of the Eucharist in the Christian life, the Council Fathers write:

> Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people," is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.[2]

This fully conscious and active participation means that

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[1] *SC* 2, 7, 10; DS 4002, 4007, 4010; cf. *MD* 492.

[2] *SC* 14; DS 4014.

> Christ's faithful … should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.[3]

[3] *SC* 48; DS 4048. Cf. *MD* 506: "All the faithful should be aware that to participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice is their chief and supreme duty, and that not in an inert and negligent fashion, giving way to distractions and day-dreaming, but with such earnestness and concentration that they may be united as closely as possible with the High Priest, according to the Apostle, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.' And together with Him and through Him let them make their oblation, and in union with Him, let them offer up themselves."

1

The Mystagogy of the Eucharist as a Conversation Between God and Us as Between Good Friends

If active participation of the faithful in the Eucharist is a sacred action surpassing all others, the summit as well as the source of Christian spirituality, such participation must be a *free* human response to God's grace, a response which requires a profound commitment of the *whole* human person. Such a response can only be motivated by the love of God who first loved us in Christ (1 Jn. 3:4). As a greater knowledge of God's love for us in Jesus Christ will enable us to respond to that love more fully by loving God,[4] so should a greater

[4] That the affections of the heart and love, in particular, can be intensified by a fuller knowledge or apprehension of God is a common teaching of the Church Fathers (such as St. Augustine in his *On the Trinity [De Trinitate]* X.1–2), theologians (e.g., St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 27, 1, 2), and saints (cf. St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, 25, 126, 157, and 264). With respect to knowledge of God, the Father tells St. Catherine that "the more the soul tries to free her affection and bind it to me by the light of understanding, the more she will come to know. One who knows more loves more, and loving more, enjoys more" (126).

In the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the final great Ignatian meditation and capstone to the whole of the *Exercises*, entitled "Contemplation to Attain the Love of God" (*SpEx* 230–237), can be understood as one such example. In contemplating God's love for us in Jesus Christ in our personal lives

knowledge of the Eucharist enable the faithful to respond more fully to that love in a more active participation in the Eucharistic celebration.

A greater knowledge of the Eucharist in the form of instruction or catechesis was traditionally offered in the Church to promote greater participation among the faithful. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council urged this as well,[5] and, more recently, the Eleventh Synod of Bishops reiterated this call in their *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*, advocating a "mystagogy" of the Eucharist to help promote more active participation among the faithful.[6]

Commenting on this Synodal recommendation, Pope Benedict XVI concurred in his apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritas*:

> The Church's great liturgical tradition teaches us that fruitful participation in the liturgy requires that one be personally conformed to the mystery being celebrated, offering one's life to God in unity with the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the whole world … hence the need to provide an education in eucharistic faith capable of enabling the faithful to live personally what they celebrate. Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious *participatio*, what methods of formation are needed? The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a mystagogical approach to catechesis, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated.[7]

Today, "mystagogy" is generally understood as a catechetical instruction of the faithful in the sacraments with special reference to the sacraments of Christian initiation and to the deeper spiritual meaning of the liturgical rites. In the Church Fathers, this liturgical

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and in the world, we are impelled by the Spirit to give ourselves to God in the *Suscipe* in response to God's gift of God's self to us. The Eucharistic nature and implications of this meditation are profound.

[5] *SC* 11; DS 4011, 4014.

[6] XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church* (General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops & Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 47.

[7] Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 64.

instruction first arose in the form of homilies as a pastoral answer to an immediate pastoral need—that of helping the faithful to understand what they were called to do in celebrating the Eucharist—and eventually developed into a full-fledged sacramental theology in its own right.[8] This mystagogy typically made use of the Bible, usually by way of a typological analysis of crucial events in salvation history recorded in the Old Testament as applied to Christ and the Eucharistic action.[9]

One Biblically-based contemporary mystagogy that can help the faithful better understand and thus more actively participate in the Eucharistic action might be that of friendship between God and us. Friends participate in their friendship by contributing mutually to the relationship, especially in their *conversation* together. By sharing in conversation, good friends experience a greater felt intimacy in knowledge of and affection for each other. Indeed, there are a number of reasons for thinking that this experience of good friends in conversation can be the basis for a contemporary mystagogy of the Eucharist.

First, like traditional mystagogy, friends, and specifically conversations with friends, are a significant Biblical reality. While Biblical Hebrew has no exact equivalent for the word "friend,"[10] examples of friendship in the Bible abound,[11] and the experience of friendship is the basis for much moral teaching in the Hebrew

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[8] Cf. E. Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age* (New York: Pueblo, 1989).

[9] Cf. Mazza, *Mystagogy*, ix–xii, 1–13.

[10] M. Paeslack, "Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte der Worter philein 'lieben,' philia 'Liebe,' 'Freundschaft,' philos 'Freund' in der Septuaginta und im NT," *Theologia Viatorum* 5 (1953): 51–142, quoted in C. White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 46, 235.

[11] In the Hebrew Scriptures, e.g., David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:1, 19:1, 20:17, 2 Sam. 1:26), David and Cusai (2 Sam. 16), David and Barsillai (2 Sam. 19:31–39). Job had his friends (Job). In the New Testament, e.g., Jesus and his disciples (Jn. 15:13–16).

Scriptures.[12] Moreover, the Septuagint (LXX) identifies Moses as a "friend [*philos*] of God" to whom God speaks "face to face as [one] speaks to another" (Ex. 33:11). Abraham comes to be regarded in the same way (cf. Gen. 18:17), and other human beings as well are recognized as potential friends of God (cf. Wis. 7:27). In the New Testament, Jesus uses the example of friends in his teaching on praying to God (Lk. 11:5–8) and he himself refers to Lazarus as "our friend" and weeps at his death (Jn. 11:35–36).

More important, however, for a mystagogy of the Eucharist based on conversation between friends is that friendship can be understood as a Biblical description of our saving relationship with God. In John's Gospel and at the Last Supper, the very setting of the Eucharist, Jesus calls his disciples his "friends" (*philoi*) and explains why:

> This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer speak of you as slaves, for a slave does not know what his master is about. Instead I call you friends, since I have made known to you all that I heard from my father. (Jn. 15:12–15)

Jesus calls his disciples his friends in expressing his willingness to lay down his life for them and in sharing with them all that he has received from the Father, and they will be his friends if they respond by loving one another as he loves them. Therefore, as Jesus uses friendship to express for his disciples God's love for them and their response to God and one another, friendship can certainly be a legitimate Biblical reality on which a mystagogy of the Eucharist might be constructed, one that can help the faithful better understand and more actively participate in the Eucharist.

Following Jesus's use of friendship in the Gospels, the Fathers of the Church were fond of citing Biblical passages touching on friendship as an effective means of pastoral catechesis on the Christian life, especially various verses from the Psalms and quotations from the

[12] Cf. Prov. 19:4–7, Ecc. 4:9–12, Job 29:1–7, and, in the New Testament, Lk. 11:5–8, Jn. 10:11–18.

letters of St. Paul, the first letter of St. John, and St. Luke's description of the early Christian community in Acts 2.[13]

Another reason in favor of a mystagogy of the Eucharist based on friendship is the theological significance accorded to friendship in understanding our relationship with God. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, understood divine love (*caritas*) as a friendship (*amicitia*).[14]

Besides the Biblical, patristic, and theological significance of friendship, the Eucharist as a mystery of faith can be more readily understood today by means of friendship, and specifically the conversation among friends, given that conversation among friends is usually a readily accessible human experience. We can, for example, readily understand the Bible's description of God's "face to face" conversation with Moses, as one speaks to another, because we have the experience of conversing freely and intimately with our friends, and we understand Jesus's calling his apostles his friends as most people usually have some experience of friendship. Moreover, we know from our own experience that (real) friends love each other and share with one another what is most important to them, just as Jesus shared with his disciples all that he heard from the Father. Our common human experience of friendship helps us appreciate these mysteries of faith.

In addition to these considerations in support of a mystagogy of the Eucharist on friendship, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council themselves use our experience of friendship as the way to understand God's relationship with us:

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[13] Cf. White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 46–60 and D. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 167–170.

[14] Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1. In fact, appeal could be made to Aquinas's treatment of divine love (*caritas*) as friendship (*amicitia*) (*ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1) and of the Holy Spirit as the bond and personal term of love between the Father and the Son; cf. *ST* I, qq. 37–38 (and also Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV, 17–19), to make a theological case for interpreting the life of the Trinity itself as a *friendship* between the divine persons.

> In [God's] goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal [God's self] and to make known to us the hidden purpose of [God's] will (cf. Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, [we] might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (cf. Eph. 2:18; 2 Pet. 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of [God's] love speaks to [us] as friends (cf. Ex. 33:11; John 15:14–15) and lives among [us] (cf. Baruch 3:38), so that [God] may invite [us] into fellowship with [God].[15]

In God's Word, God speaks to us as to God's friends, initiating a conversation through creation (cf. Rom. 1:18ff), through God's prophets, and finally in God's Son (cf. Heb. 1:1–3). By listening to God speak to us, we enter into a conversation with God and so become God's friends.

Conversation between friends, therefore, readily presents itself as the basis for a contemporary mystagogy of the Eucharist that can promote more active participation among the faithful by making the mystery of the Eucharist more readily accessible in terms of a conversation between God and us as between good friends.

What follows is the sketch of such a mystagogy.

While friendship and conversation among friends are accessible human experiences, few of us have reflected systematically enough on the nature and significance of these experiences to make conversation between good friends a helpful way of understanding and participating in the Eucharist. As a way of helping us in this systematic examination of friendship and conversation between good friends, we will, in the following section, look at two different traditions in understanding friendship as represented by two famous thinkers within those traditions. The first tradition is that of the classical Greco-Roman world as represented by Aristotle (384–322 BCE), particularly in his philosophy of friendship as presented in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The second tradition is that of Christianity as represented primarily by St. Augustine (354–430 CE) in his *Confessions* and other writings.

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[15] *DV* 2; DS 4202.

Aristotle's philosophy of friendship was the most influential intellectual presentation of friendship in the classical Greco-Roman world and subsequently became the classical source for understanding friendship in Western civilization.[16] Though he wrote no formal treatise on the subject, Augustine, himself a Church Father, presented views throughout his lifetime that have had a substantial impact on later Christian understandings of friendship.[17]

As I shall argue in what follows, the Christian understanding of friendship, with its overarching faith perspective derived from divine revelation, was able to incorporate much of the Greco-Roman tradition's best insights on friendship and conversation between friends in understanding God and our relationship with God. Nevertheless, while it is finally the Christian tradition of friendship that offers us the proper basis for a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends, we need to appreciate how this tradition incorporated the insights into friendship and conversation offered by Greco-Roman thought and especially as represented by Aristotle. For this reason, Aristotle's contribution to a Christian understanding of friendship will be examined in some detail.

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[16] The second great influence on classical and indeed on later Western thought on friendship was that of Cicero, especially his *De Amicitia* or *Laelius*; cf. *On Friendship* or *Laelius*. Cicero's views on friendship, however, were largely derived from Greek philosophy, most notably from the Greek Stoics who were themselves heavily influenced by Aristotle. On Cicero's indebtedness to Greek philosophy in general and Aristotle in particular, cf. White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 31–38 and Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, 130–140.

[17] For St. Augustine's general influence on medieval thinkers on friendship such as Aelred of Rievaulx, cf. A. Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study* (London: SPCK, 1973) and specifically Aelred of Rievaulx's views of friendship in his *Spiritual Friendship* (Washington, DC: Cistercian Publications/Consortium Press, 1974), 29–35. For St. Augustine's influence on St. Thomas Aquinas's views on friendship, cf. J. Pazgan, *L'amicizia in Aristotele e il suo sviluppo nel pensiero di San Tommaso d'Aquino nella Somma Teologica I-II qq. 26–28* (Roma: Pontificia Universitas S. Thomas Aquinate in Urbe, 1999), 184–189.

Building upon Aristotle's analysis of the nature of conversation between good friends as incorporated into the Christian tradition, the fourth section examines the Eucharist according to a mystagogy of conversation between God and us as between good friends. This mystagogy of the Eucharistic celebration will focus on the two main parts of the celebration—the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Just as a conversation between good friends begins when one or other of the friends invites the other to join her or him by speaking first themselves, so in the Eucharist does God invite us to join God in conversation by speaking God's Word to us in the Liturgy of the Word. And, just as a conversation between friends properly commences when the invited friend responds to her or his friend's invitation, so in the Eucharistic celebration do we respond to God's invitation to us in the Liturgy of the Word by speaking God's Word back to God in offering Jesus and ourselves in Jesus to the Father. In the Eucharist as conversation, the interlocutors are God the Father and we as Christ's Body united in the Spirit with Christ our Head, with Jesus Christ as the subject of our conversation—what God the Father has done for us in Christ and our response to the Father in Christ.

2

Friendship and Conversation Between Friends in the Classical Greco-Roman and Christian Traditions

Friendship and Conversation Between Friends in the Classical Greco-Roman Tradition: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

The classical Greco-Roman view of friendship finds its most complete and systematic presentation in Aristotle's philosophy of friendship. In his ethico-political masterpiece *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle examines the nature of friendship within an overall view of the ethical dimension of a fully happy human life.[18]

According to Aristotle, friendship (*philia*) is a stable and enduring human relationship[19] of mutual affection (*philia*) which moves the

[18] Human rationality for Aristotle is by nature social (*phusei politicon*) (*NE* I.7, 1097b1) such that human fulfillment and happiness can only be found in living in community. As is evident in the final chapter of Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE* X.9, 1179a35–1181b22), Aristotle meant the *NE* to be understood as an introduction to virtuous living in one's *polis*.

[19] In Aristotle's terminology, friendship is a habit or character trait: an enduring state of soul in the friends brought about by their continuously choosing to interact with each other; cf. *NE* VIII.5, 1157b5–35.

friends (*philoi*) to want to be with each other.[20] The basic activity of friendship is conversation, the distinctively human act of social rationality by which the friends communicate themselves and their love for each other in sharing their thoughts and feelings.[21] Conversation as this communication between friends is not limited to verbal expression in language; it is also made manifest in shared activities (especially those activities the friends most enjoy) and in a mutual exchange of goods (e.g., gifts, economic assistance) as well as personal services (e.g., solace, moral encouragement).[22]

There are a number of distinctive features of friendship which distinguish it from other human relationships. While based in affection, friendship for Aristotle is distinguished from other human relationships of affection by being a matter of *choice* rather than based on natural bonds of family or race.[23] Another distinctive feature of friendship is that it is an affectionate relationship between *equals*.[24] Other human relationships, for instance, such as those between parent and child, husband and wife, teacher and student, and king and subject, are between human beings unequal in age, sex, education, or authority. If these relationships are also relationships of affection, they, too, must be equalized in some way by the lesser-ranked party showing greater affection, honor, or obedience to the superior party.[25] But because

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[20] *NE* VIII.2, 1158a1–4; IX.5, 1166b30–1157a20; VIII.5, 1157b20–25.

[21] "Conversation" is the distinctively human act of communication: a mutual *act* of sharing (*koinonein*) in speech (*logon*) and thought (*dianoias*) what one loves most, as well as one's own consciousness, with the friend; cf. *NE* IX.9, 1170b8–15; also IX.12, 1171b33–1172a15.

[22] *NE* IX.12, 1171b33–1172a15.

[23] *NE* VIII.5, 1157b30–35; VIII.4, 1157a30–33. Because friendship is a matter of choice, Aristotle considers good friendship a virtue or like a virtue. This, by implication, makes conversation, the characteristic activity of good friendship, a virtuous activity.

[24] *NE* VIII.6, 1158b1–5.

[25] *NE* VIII.7, 1158b12–1159a2.

friendship is distinctively a relationship among equals, Aristotle believed that only human beings could be friends; there could be no *friendship* between human beings and God.[26]

People choose to be friends out of a mutually acknowledged affection for one another based on something they find lovable (*phileton*) in each other. What they find lovable in each other, according to Aristotle, are of three kinds: either a mutual *usefulness* they see in each other, a mutual *pleasure* they derive from each other, or a *virtuous character* they admire in one another.[27] Mutual affection based on one or other of these lovable qualities motivates people to become friends in *sharing* what they value (consider good) in each other.

Aristotle analyzes friendship as being of different kinds according to the basis on which the friends love each other—utility friendships are friendships based on the mutual utility the friends afford each other, pleasure friendships are friendships based on the pleasure the friends give each other, and complete or perfect (*teleia*) friendship is friendship based on the esteem the friends have for each other's virtuous character. This latter friendship—friendship in the primary sense of the term—is what Aristotle considers friendship without qualification.[28] This is the friendship of good people whose affection for each other is based on the esteem they have for each other's virtuous character. Affection based on the recognition of and esteem for virtue is that which motivates these friends to love each other for *who they are in themselves* (good human beings) rather than for extraneous or accidental qualities, like the utility or pleasure they might provide for each other, which are the bases for the other kinds of friendship. Because each good person loves themselves for who they *really* are—a virtuous person—good

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[26] *NE* VIII.7, 1158b33–36. Aristotle's view was that of the classical world in general; cf. "Friendship with God" in Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, 167–170.

[27] *NE* VIII.2, 1155b31–1156a5.

[28] *NE* VIII.3, 1156b6–10.

friends are able to love each other *as* they love themselves.[29] Such a friendship is also complete because it includes the best of what is good in the other kinds of friendship. Since acting virtuously is most pleasant for virtuous people, their friendship includes all that is good in friendships of pleasure, and as virtuous friends help each other in living virtuously, they are useful to each other in all the right ways.

Besides being *complete*, the friendship of good people is also the *most permanent* of friendships since the virtuous person's love of virtue, on which this friendship is based, is more stable and enduring than is a love of pleasure or utility characteristic of the other friendships.[30] However, this kind of friendship is also *rare*, for not only are good people relatively scarce, but should they be able to meet, their forming a friendship requires that they live with each other for a length of time that is sufficient to establish the intimacy (*suneitheias*) and trust (*piste*) necessary for sharing themselves with each other.[31]

Another characteristic of friendship between good people is a lack of affective exclusivity. Good friends are not closed in on themselves and jealous of their relationship. They are rather welcoming of others of like mind and character and are willing to include them in their friendship, although Aristotle admits that there are definite limits as to how many friends can be included in a complete friendship since all the friends would have to live with each other to be able to spend enough time conversing intimately and regularly.[32]

Aristotle sees this friendship of good people as central to the happy human life. As human beings are rational and social by nature, human

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[29] The virtuous person's love of their friend as another self is based on their love of themselves; cf. *NE* IX.4, 1166a1–1166b30 and IX.9, 1170b5–7, for a person loves himself most of all; cf. *NE* VIII.7, 1159a12–13.

[30] *NE* VIII.3, 1158b10–25.

[31] *NE* VIII.3, 1156b25–35; VIII.5, 1158a10–15.

[32] Cf. *NE* IX.10, 1169a20–1171a20 and, unlike friendships based on pleasure or utility, *NE* VIII.6, 1158a10–15.

happiness consists in a life of actualizing (*energein*) this rational and social potential through virtuous activities (*eu praxei*) with others in a political community.[33] In sharing virtuous activities together in their political community, good friends are the prime example of human happiness.[34] And as virtuous activity with others in the right political community benefits the community, and good friends support each other in virtuous activity, good friends together benefit the political community the most.[35] Good friends are, for these reasons, the happiest of human beings and are most able to help others in their political community live well.

Of the various and sundry virtuous activities that make up a complete and happy human life—activities of justice, generosity, truthfulness in speech, etc.—the very best is that of contemplation, which Aristotle puts forth as an act of understanding the whole of nature as finally ordered to God, the prime mover.[36] In this activity, the human being becomes most like God who by nature is engaged in an eternal act of contemplation.[37] However, unlike God, human beings cannot engage in contemplation all the time, yet if they are wise as well as morally virtuous, they will try to contemplate as much as they can and help others in their political community do so as well. Since good friends want what is best for each other, and if they are wise as well as

[33] *NE* I.7, 1098a3–18; *NE* X.5–7.

[34] Cf. *NE* IX.9, 1169b18–1170a20.

[35] Cf. *NE* X.9, which is focused on the education of citizens in the polis by means of law. Here Aristotle transitions into his *Politics*, which culminates in understanding virtuous government of the polis as the aristocracy of virtue among good friends; cf. Chapter IV in T. Sherman, *The Perfect Happiness of Virtuous Friends: The Nature and Place of Perfect Friendship in the Happy Life of the Virtuous in Aristotle's Practical Philosophy* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999).

[36] Cf. *NE* X.7–8, 1177a12–1178ab6–28; *Meta* XII.7, 1072a18–1073a13; *Meta* XII.10, 1075a10–1076a5.

[37] *Meta* XII.7, 1072b15–29; XII.9, 1074b35–1075a10.

morally good, they will help each other in their pursuit of this activity *together* in *conversation*.[38] Indeed, as virtuous activities are the best of all good things, and contemplation is the best of virtuous activities, good friends love each other most in sharing the very best of all goods—their contemplation—together in conversation with each other.

If conversation, therefore, is the characteristic activity of friends, and this activity consists in a mutual sharing of good things with each other, two important points need to be emphasized if we are to make use of Aristotle's philosophy of friendship as one possible source for a mystagogy of the Eucharist based on conversation between good friends.

First, it is more characteristic of friends, according to Aristotle, to love (*philein*) than to be loved (*phileisthai*).[39] From Aristotle's famous analysis of benefactors (*euergetai*), he tells us why this is so[40]—the benefactor *loves* the one she or he benefits more than the one benefited loves her or him for the benefactor, in actually benefiting the recipient, is more active than the recipient who merely receives the benefaction. Being more active than the recipient, the benefactor is more alive and, as her or his action is morally virtuous, experiences not only the natural human pleasure of being more fully *alive* in virtuous *activity* but also the distinctive pleasure of consciously doing something virtuous for the recipient of her or his benefaction. As she or he loves their own well-being in actively benefiting the recipient, the benefactor loves the recipient as the beneficiary of their virtue. The recipient of the benefaction, on the other hand, experiences being loved by the benefactor in receiving the benefactor's gift but, as this reception is relatively passive, experiences nothing of the satisfaction of *doing* something virtuous in loving someone else. The recipient may view the benefactor with gratitude—and even love—but she or he cannot love the benefactor as the benefactor loves them. While Aristotle includes

[38] Cf. *NE* IX.9, 1170b8–15; IX.12, 1171b33–1172a16.

[39] *NE* 1159a27.

[40] Cf. *NE* IX.6, 1167b15–1168a27.

the artist and her or his artistic work as well as the parent (especially the mother) and child as examples of this relationship between benefactor and recipient, this analysis is implicit in his understanding of sharing among friends.

Friendship as actualized in conversation consists in friends' loving and being loved by each other in their giving and receiving good things to and from each other. But while the experience of *being loved* in receiving good things from the friend is something very desirable in itself, it is better nevertheless and much more desirable to love the friend by *giving* good things to them rather than being loved by them in receiving good things from them.[41]

The second important consideration for the purpose of basing a mystagogy of the Eucharist on Aristotle's philosophy of friendship is this—that the ground of the friends' love for each other in their conversation is the love each has for herself or himself.

In sharing themselves in their thoughts and feelings and what they love most with each other in conversation, each friend loves the other *as* she or he loves herself or himself, and each wishes for the other what they wish for themselves—to become a virtuous human being, living as divine (and divinely happy) a life as is humanly possible. The friends' love for each other is based on and an extension of each friend's love of self, of her or his desire to become virtuous, to secure virtue goodness (*kalon*) for themselves. In Book IX of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains:

> The virtuous man's conduct is often guided by the interests of his friends and of his country, and he will, if necessary, lay down his life in their behalf. For he will surrender wealth and power and all the goods that men struggle to win, if he can secure virtue goodness for himself; since he would prefer an hour of rapture to a long period of mild enjoyment, a year of moral goodness to many years of ordinary existence, one great and glorious exploit to many small successes. And this is doubtless the

[41] Cf. *NE* VIII.7, 1159a13–27 where Aristotle explains why *honor*, which most people desire for something *else*, is less desirable than being loved—a good desirable *in itself*.

> case with those who give their lives for others; thus they choose great moral goodness for themselves … it may even happen that [such a person] will surrender to his friend the performance of some virtuous activity, and that it may be morally better for him to be the cause of his friend's virtuous activity than to perform that activity himself.[42]

Since the best of all goods is virtuous *activity* (activity which requires the complete cognitive and affective commitment of the human being in her or his *choice* to so act[43]) and becoming *virtuous* as its result (for one's character depends on one's actions[44]), the virtuous friend will, if necessary, give her or his very life for their friend and, on occasion, will even choose to allow their friend *instead* of themselves to *act* virtuously in a given situation. However, even in these exemplary choices she or he still secures the *greater* moral good for herself or himself, for in choosing to give their life for their friend, she or he *acts* virtuously and so gains for themselves virtue goodness (even if in a moment), and their very choice to allow their friend this opportunity to perform a virtuous act rather than take it themselves is *itself* a virtuous act.[45]

As Aristotle represents the philosophical acme of the classical Greco-Roman view of friendship and is the major philosophical influence (both direct and indirect) on later Western and Christian views

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[42] *NE* IX.8, 1169a20–35.

[43] Choice (*prohairesis*) for Aristotle is the *performance* of an action as the desired means to an end. Choice presupposes a cognitive apprehension of both the end and the means in an affective embrace of the end in intention (*boulesis*) and the deliberative desire (*bouleiousis*) of the means in performing the action; cf. *NE* III.3–5, 1112b30–1113b5.

[44] Cf. *NE* III.5, 1114a5–10.

[45] The good friend may love his friend as he loves himself, but he cannot *choose to act* virtuously (and so become virtuous) for his friend—he can do so only for himself. He can encourage, challenge, cajole, set a good example, etc., for his friend so that his friend might actually choose to act virtuously, but he cannot himself *choose* to act virtuously for his friend as he can for himself. It is for this reason that the good friend, like everyone else, naturally loves himself most; cf. *NE* VIII.7, 1159a9–12 and IX.9, 1170b8.

on the subject, the following characteristics of Aristotle's philosophy of friendship and conversation may help us in constructing a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and ourselves as between good friends.

First, we human beings are, as Aristotle maintains, both rational and social by nature such that our natural fulfillment—and thus our happiness—consists in a life of virtuous activity *together* and especially in the virtuous activity of conversing together as good friends.

Second, conversation among good friends includes not simply verbal communication of thoughts and feelings but also a communication in any good thing the friends share with each other, most notably their favorite activities as well as material goods and personal services they give to and perform for each other.

Third, conversation between good friends can be understood as the way the friends *share* (give) *themselves* with one another in sharing their own consciousness of themselves and good things with each other.

Fourth, as conversation is a *mutual* activity of the friends in giving themselves to one another, conversation will, by implication, also include *receiving themselves* from one another in their receiving good things from each other.

Fifth, conversation as a mutual activity of giving (and receiving) themselves enables the good friends to more fully *enjoy* sharing good things with each other, thereby making their shared activity better, more pleasant, and more enduring than if each of them had acted alone. And in sharing the best of goods—virtuous activities and ultimately the activity of contemplation—with each other, the friends will more fully enjoy and help each other realize their desire of becoming as divine as possible. For this reason, the supreme human happiness is the contemplation of God realized in conversation in a community of good friends who are also wise.

These features of conversation between good friends have obvious implications for our understanding of the Eucharist as a shared activity of good friends in conversation. However, if these five features of friendship and conversation in Aristotle's philosophy seem to commend

themselves to us in our attempt to construct a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between *God* and *ourselves* as between good friends, there are also obvious features of the Aristotelian (and Greco-Roman) view of friendship that seem to prohibit such an attempt.

First, while human happiness for Aristotle reaches its high point in a shared contemplation of God in conversation among good friends, this God the friends contemplate is according to Aristotle a consciousness which neither creates nor has any concern for the world. Aristotle's God is quite unconcerned with those who would seek it.

Second, Aristotle's God is, for the whole of nature as well as for those who would consciously seek it, merely the *object* of a natural *aspiration* for the fullest possible life. This relationship is strictly one-way based on the natural desire for perfection within species. In this worldview, while good friends may be able to give themselves to each other in benevolent love for one another (that is, love each other as other selves), their motivation for doing so—that they *become like* God—treats God simply as the shared *object* of their aspiration. If Aristotle's view of friendship and conversation *between* good friends is one of benevolence, the friends' relationship to God is purely "egoistic."

Finally, even if Aristotle's God were naturally concerned for human beings and human beings were concerned about the goodness of divinity in itself, a friendship could not exist between God and human beings because the distance between the divine and the human is too great for there to be any equality between the partners.

These three features of the Aristotelian view of friendship need to be radically revised if we are to make use of the positive insights Aristotle provides in his philosophy of friendship for a mystagogy of the Eucharist. For such a mystagogy, we will need an understanding of God as a *personal* reality who cares for human beings as well as an understanding of human beings as capable of caring for God. And we need to find some point of similarity between the divine and the human which will afford the kind of equality between God and human beings necessary for a friendship between them. For this, we must turn

to the Christian tradition's understanding of friendship as represented in particular by St. Augustine.

Friendship and Conversation in the Christian Tradition: St. Augustine

Unlike Aristotle and despite his prolific output, St. Augustine did not write any formal treatise on friendship; nevertheless, his acquaintance with classical thought on the subject and his experience of many and varied friendships throughout his life inspired much of what he thought and wrote.[46] Augustine did not, as far as we know, read Aristotle directly, although he was familiar enough with Aristotle's views on wisdom, happiness, and on friendship in particular from the classical Latin author with whom he was directly familiar—Cicero.[47] Yet while Cicero was a major influence on Augustine's views on friendship in his youth and even after his conversion to Christianity, his experience of and reflections on friendship take a radically new direction with his religious conversion as he describes it in his *Confessions*. Strongly influenced by his faith, Augustine turns from a classically inspired humanist view of friendship to one that is centered on God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Influenced as he was by classical thought, Augustine initially understood friendship (*amicitia*) as a human relationship of two or more people united by their mutual affection (*caritas*, *benevolentia*, *dilectio*) for each other based on shared common interests. In Book IV of his

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[46] Cf. M. McNamara, *Friendship in St. Augustine* (Fribourg, Switzerland: The University Press, 1958).

[47] In his *Confessions* (III.8), St. Augustine tells his readers how greatly he was influenced in his youth by reading Cicero's *Hortensius*—a work itself indebted to Aristotle's *Protrepticus*; cf. Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 39. For Aristotle's influence on Cicero's views on friendship, cf. *supra* footnote 16.

Confessions, Augustine describes a youthful friendship he had with an unnamed friend in these terms:

> I had felt that my soul and his were "one soul in two bodies," and so my life was to me a horror. I did not wish to live with only half of myself. And perhaps the reason why I so feared death was that then the whole of my much-loved friend would have died.[48]

This friendship ended in the death of the young man, which left Augustine devastated. It was only the solace of friends and especially the solace of conversation with friends that saved him:

> The greatest source of repair and restoration was the solace of other friends … to make conversation, to share a joke, to perform mutual acts of kindness, to read together well-written books, to share in trifling and in serious matters, to disagree though without animosity—just as a person debates with [herself or himself]—and in the very rarity of disagreement to find the salt of normal harmony, to teach each other something or to learn from one another, to long with impatience for those absent, to welcome them with gladness on their arrival. These and other signs come from the heart of those who love and are loved and are expressed through the mouth, through the tongue, through the eyes, and a thousand gestures of delight, acting as fuel to set our minds on first and out of many to forge unity.[49]

In his *Confessions*, however, Augustine also presents a new kind of friendship, one that he calls a "true friendship"—a friendship in which the friends "are joined by the love of the Holy Spirit given them by God."[50] This new understanding of friendship as "true" is based on God and Jesus Christ in Christian faith.

In a letter to his friend Macedonius, Augustine writes that as the only truly blessed life is to be found in Christ, true friendship must flow from Christ. This means that

> no one can be a true friend of [others] unless [she or he] is first a friend of Truth; if friendship does not come into being spontaneously, it

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[48] *Conf.* IV.6.

[49] *Conf.* IV.13.

[50] *Conf.* IV.4, 7.

> cannot exist at all. The philosophers have much to say on this subject, but one does not find among them true affection, that is, true worship of the true God.[51]

In basing true friendship on the friends' being friends of Truth, St. Augustine may well be thinking of the verse Aristotle himself quotes in response to his philosophical break with his friend Plato: "both [friendship and truth] are dear to us but it is our duty to prefer the truth."[52] Augustine agrees. If truth is to be preferred over friendship, friendship worthy of the name must be based on the truth. Since the truth for Augustine is Jesus Christ, true friendship is friendship based on Christ in which the friends are joined by the love of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. This true friendship based on God's gift of the Spirit transcends the classical (and in particular Aristotelian) view of friendship in that the basis for friendship is now understood to be the personal mystery of God and God's grace. More pointedly, and in contrast to the classical view of the best kind of friendship being that of a friendship of the *virtuous* (Aristotle's primary or perfect friendship), the friends in true friendship are united in their affections for each other as they are fundamentally united to God by the God-given *supernatural* virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Yet if true friends are united to God by their supernatural virtue, they are also fully committed to *each other* by those same virtues. Here Augustine incorporates an important theme from the classical Greco-Roman understanding of virtue friendship into his own understanding of true friendship, namely, that the good friend in loving the other friend *for that friend's sake* loves her or him *as* she or he loves her or his own self. Augustine is thus able to integrate and then transform this classical theme in his understanding of true friendship by appealing to the *supernatural* virtue of love involved in the Christian friend's love of self. He interprets this love as Christ's second great commandment to "love your neighbor *as* yourself"—a commandment which Jesus says is *like* the first: "Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind"

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[51] *Ep* 155, quoted in White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 199.

[52] Cf. *NE* I.6, 1096a14–16.

(Matt. 22:37–39). For Augustine, this means that proper self-love is the *result* of one's love of God and the *basis* for loving oneself and one's neighbor.

In one of his letters, Augustine explains that no one *really* loves herself or himself *unless* she or he loves God, and so when we love a friend as we love ourselves, we must wish that they, too, love God above all else.[53] Elsewhere he writes:

> God knows that not only do I love you but [that] I love you as myself for I am well aware that I wish the same good things for you as I do for myself.[54]

The *neighbor* in Jesus's second commandment, however, is *everyone* without distinction. Thus, if self-love and love of the friend are to be understood, as Augustine does, in terms of loving God and one's neighbor as oneself, this seems to make love of the friend either superfluous or an unwonted limitation on the command to love everyone one meets as one loves oneself.

While Augustine recognized that the neighbor is *every* other person, he nevertheless thinks that love of the friend is neither superfluous nor a contradictory limitation to Christ's second commandment. Rather, friendship can be seen as the complete *fulfillment* of this second commandment when *extended to all*, even our enemies. In a letter to another friend, Augustine explains:

> Friendship must not be restricted within narrow limits. It should embrace all people to whom love and affection are owed, although it will be stronger towards some, less so to others[,] and it should extend as far as our enemies for whom we are commanded to pray. And so there is no one to whom we do not owe affection on account of the fellowship of our shared nature, even if our love is not mutual. But

[53] *Ep* 177, quoted in White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 200.

[54] *Ep* 23, quoted in White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 201.

> it is right that we should particularly love those who love us in return with a holy and chaste love.[55]

Moreover, Augustine understands friendship as a completion of the second commandment in its *reciprocity* or *mutuality*. While the commandment is to love the neighbor, this love is completed when the *neighbor loves us as we love* the *neighbor*. In other words, it is not enough for Augustine that I love you as I love myself; it is *better* that you also love me as you love yourself so that *together* we can love each other as we love ourselves in our love for God. This love of friendship completes love of neighbor in that it is a love poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us by God (Rom. 5:5) which witnesses more effectively (gives more glory) to *Divine Truth*—for God in God's self is a mysterious community of friendship[56] who has created and redeemed *all* so that *all* might enjoy a true friendship with each other in God. This is the eschatological assurance of true friendship which motivates us in this life to realize something of its promise in our establishing true friendships with others according to an *ordo caritas*.

Besides the eschatological hope true friends have that their friendship will include and be included in a true friendship of all in God, they also have the hope that they will attain a perfect intimacy with each other in their knowing and loving each other completely in heaven.

This eschatological dimension to true friendship, founded on faith, hope, and love of the God of Jesus Christ, is another radical difference between Augustine's view of friendship and the "this-worldly" humanism of Aristotle's classical understanding of the same. Because true friendship is based on the living personal God whose grace empowers the friends to love each other in their love of God,

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[55] *Ep* 130, 13, quoted in White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 203–204.

[56] In *De Trinitate* 7, 6, and 12, St. Augustine writes of the essential characteristics of the Trinity as unity, likeness, and equality, all of which, as White points out (*Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 210), were classically regarded as characteristics of a friendship of virtue.

that same divine grace gives the friends the eschatological hope that their friendship will not end in death but will rather be fulfilled eternally in a true friendship with God who will be All in all.

Augustine recognizes a mysterious power in the reciprocity or mutuality of shared affection among friends in true friendship. In a letter to a friend, he uses images of payment and debt to observe the following:

> But I always owe love which is the only thing that makes someone still a debtor even when it has been paid back.… It is not lost when it is given back but rather it grows by being given back.[57]

Love *grows* in *being given* back. As this love is inspired by God and indeed an experience of God, the friend, in responding to the inspiration to love by loving, grows in her or his relationship with God as she or he deepens their relationship with their friend. This might be viewed as Augustine's Christian faith understanding what is valid in Aristotle's analysis, namely, that the fulfillment of friends as human beings is in giving to—rather than receiving from—each other.[58]

In Augustine's understanding of true friendship, the friends love each other in their love for God, giving themselves to one another in sharing all things together out of their love for each other in God. This friendship of mutual self-giving in the love of God finds its fullest realization in *conversation*, for in conversation the friends are able to share with one another all that is most important to them—their faith, hope, and love for God. The famous example of such conversation is found in Book IX of the *Confessions*, in Augustine's account of the conversation his mother St. Monica and he share as the two of them stand at the window of an apartment overlooking a garden in Ostia, just before they plan to set sail for Africa. Augustine writes:

> Alone with each other, we talked very intimately. "Forgetting the past and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (Phil. 3:13), we were searching together in the presence of the truth which is you yourself. We asked

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[57] *Ep* 192, quoted in White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 204.

[58] *Above* p. 21–23.

> what quality of life the eternal life of the saints will have, a life which "neither eye has seen nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9). But with the mouth of the heart wide open, we drank in the waters flowing from your spring on high, "the spring of life" (Ps. 35:10) which is you. Sprinkled with this dew to the limit of our capacity, our minds attempted in some degree to reflect on so great a reality.
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> The conversation led us … our minds were lifted up by an ardent affection towards eternal being itself … and while we talked … we touched it [divine wisdom] in some small degree by a total concentration of the heart. And we sighed and left behind us "the first-fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23).
>
> That is how it was when at that moment we extended our reach and in a flash of mental energy attained the eternal wisdom which abides beyond all things … so too eternal life is of the quality of that moment of understanding after which we sighed.[59]

In this elegantly rhetorical reminiscence of their conversation, Augustine describes the love Monica and he have for one another in their love for God. In sharing their faith, hope, and love for God in conversation, these two friends share themselves with each other, drawing closer to God and closer to one another by God's grace, for their mutual act of giving themselves to each other in conversation is inspired by the Holy Spirit whom they experience in their love for God and for one another in God.

This conversation between St. Augustine and St. Monica as inspired by the personal mystery of God in their lives might well be seen as the Christian understanding and experience of conversation between good friends which transcends Aristotle's description of the conversation virtuous friends share in their contemplation of God. Yet if Augustine's and Monica's conversation in faith transcends that of Aristotle's good friends, their conversation actually includes much of what Aristotle describes of conversation between good friends. Like Aristotle's good friends, Monica and Augustine share their contemplation of God together in conversation and, like virtuous friends, they do so out of

[59] *Conf.* IX.24–25.

love for each other—each wants for the other what they want most for themselves. However, unlike Aristotle's god, the God of Monica and Augustine is a living personal mystery who inspires them to love God and each other in God. Because of this divine inspiration, Monica and Augustine love God for God's sake and not simply for their own benefit; they do not treat God as an idol, a mere object of their desire to become like God as Aristotle's good friends cannot help but do.

Moreover, as Monica and Augustine are able by God's grace to love the real living God for God's sake and not simply as an object of their desire for happiness, so are they able, by that same grace, to love each other as they really are—created, redeemed, and sanctified children of God. As their self-love is rooted in the love of God, their love for each other as other selves is likewise rooted in their love of God.

Finally, as the God Monica and Augustine love in their conversation with each other is the personal mystery who is acting *in* them by inspiring them, their conversation with each other *about* God moves them to turn *to* God in prayerful contemplation so that their conversation about God becomes a shared conversation *with* God that transcends anything Aristotle's good friends experienced in their shared contemplation about God. And as theirs is a conversation between true friends, their conversation together about God and with God is in the love of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Conversation in Christian friendship, then, is an activity in which the friends share with each other all that is of greatest value to them—their faith, hope, and love of God—and thereby give themselves to each other in love as this love of theirs is grounded in God's love for them and their love for God. Their friendship, and particularly their conversation, can be understood—and experienced—as mutual self-giving out of love in praise, thanksgiving, and service to God, thereby radically correcting the classical Greco-Roman naturalistic understanding of the divine and the human in Aristotle's understanding of good friends and their conversation with each other.

Friendship and Conversation in the Christian Tradition after St. Augustine: Some Representative Thinkers

While St. Augustine has been taken in this essay as the representative thinker on friendship within the Christian tradition, many of his insights have been taken up and deepened by subsequent thinkers who share the same faith. For the sake of a more ample view of friendship and conversation within the Christian tradition as a basis for our mystagogy of the Eucharist, brief mention will be made of some specific contributions by two thinkers from the Middle Ages—Aelred of Rievaulx and St. Thomas Aquinas—and one contemporary thinker—the Quaker philosopher John Macmurray.

In his influential work *Spiritual Friendship*, Aelred of Rievaulx (1109–1266) especially emphasizes the nature of conversation between friends as an activity of mutual self-giving. In understanding spiritual friendship as a relationship between two or more people united by their mutual affection for each other in Jesus Christ, one distinctive feature of Aelred's view is his emphasis on the importance of self-disclosure among spiritual friends. Aelred writes:

> But only those do we call friends to whom we can fearlessly entrust our heart and all its secrets.…[60]

> Speak freely, therefore, and entrust to your friend all your cares and thoughts, that you may both learn and teach, give and receive, pour out and drink in.[61]

Aelred's insistence on the importance of self-disclosure in conversation is not something new. Aristotle can be said to have implicitly recognized its importance when he pointed out that good friends share their consciousness with each other in sharing their thoughts and emotions in conversations. Self-disclosure among friends was then subsequently developed in later Hellenistic and Roman

[60] "Spiritual Friendship" in Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship* I.26, p. 56.

[61] Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship* I.4, p. 52.

thought.[62] And the importance of self-disclosure in friendship was certainly not unknown to St. Augustine. What makes Aelred's emphasis on intimacy and transparency in conversation new is his explicit grounding of this intimacy on the friends' love of Christ.

The friends' love of Christ enables them to be transparent with each other in their conversation because they trust that they love each other in their love of Christ and that their love of Christ will insure that whatever they share with each other about themselves will be consonant with that love. As spiritual friends love themselves and each other in their love of Christ, their intimacy and transparency in conversation is based explicitly on their religious faith—a characteristic mark that their friendship is spiritual.

In his *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) advances the Christian tradition on friendship as he directly confronts the Aristotelian denial of the possibility of friendship between God and human beings. Aquinas argues that friendship between God and human beings is possible because God has created human beings to be capable of freely receiving and responding to God in knowledge and love.[63] Moreover, the love (*caritas*) that God and human beings share is, by God's grace, a friendship love (*amor amicitiae*) in benevolence (*benevolentia*) and mutuality (*communicatio*).[64] The first effect of this friendship is the union (*unio*) between friends in their mutual knowledge and love of each other.[65] Friendship along with union can then result in an ecstasy (*extasis*) of the friends, their "going outside themselves" in their love for each other's true good.[66] In friendship specifically

[62] E.g., Seneca, *Moral Letters* III.2–3: "Speak as boldly with him as with yourself … share with your friend all your worries, all your thoughts.…" Cf. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, 149–153.

[63] *ST* II-II, q. 23, 1, ad. 2. Cf. *ST* I-II, q. 27, a. 3.

[64] *ST* II-II, q. 23, 1, *respondeo*.

[65] *ST* I-II, q. 28, 1.

[66] *ST* I-II, q. 28, 3.

between God and human beings, we might say that God's love for God's friends is "ecstatic" in so far as God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying love is *gratuitous*, and that the love human beings have for God is ecstatic in so far as they love God for God's infinite goodness and love their own good and the good of others in their love of God. This ecstasy of love in friendship between God and human beings is based on true love of self—God's love of God's own infinite goodness as the source of God's *gratuitous* love for human beings who share in that goodness, and human beings' love of themselves as a good which has its source in God. On the basis of this true self-love, God loves human beings gratuitously and human beings by grace reciprocate by loving God, themselves out of love for God, and their neighbor *as* they love themselves.

Aquinas's description of this ecstatic nature of friendship is important for it can be seen as a further emphasis in the Christian tradition on the possibility of friendship with God based on the personal nature of God as the gratuitous creator and redeemer of human beings interested in establishing a friendship with them. This ecstatic nature of friendship between God and human beings and between human beings in God also makes their conversation with each other an activity of mutual self-giving that transcends anything Aristotle and the Greco-Roman tradition conceived as possible among good friends.

Finally, brief mention can be made of the near contemporary philosopher John Macmurray (1891–1976) who, along with Aelred and Aquinas, extended and deepened our understanding of friendship and conversation within the Christian tradition. In his Gifford Lectures subsequently published in two volumes, *The Self as Agent* and *Persons in Relation*, Macmurray provides us with a philosophical analysis of a distinctive kind of knowledge good friends share with each other in their conversation.[67]

[67] J. Macmurray, *The Self as Agent* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970) and J. Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970).

According to Macmurray, what good friends *reveal* about themselves to each other in conversation is linguistically expressed by their distinctively mutual first- and second-person address—*I* (speaking my name) want to tell *you* (speaking your name) something about *myself*, and vice versa for the friend. What the friends share of themselves with each other in this conversation out of freedom and love results in a *personal* knowledge of each other. This personal knowledge the friends share has a content that can be verbally (linguistically) expressed but which has direct personal significance only for them. This verbally expressible content (*what*) the friends reveal about themselves to each other can be separated from the immediacy of their conversation, although once this separation occurs, the content of their conversation, now cast in third person terms graspable by anyone who can understand the concepts expressed in the content, can be *objectively* understood but loses the *personal* significance it has for the friends themselves.[68]

A third-person account of the friends' personal knowledge of each other can come about in a number of ways. For instance, one of the friends, or both themselves, can speak of the personal knowledge they have of each other to a third party who does not participate in their conversation as friends. However, in being so divulged, the personal knowledge they share with each other becomes separate from their lived relationship and so loses its personal significance—for them as well as for the third party. The friends can speak to others *about* their love but they do not speak *to* each other in love. Another way personal knowledge that friends share with each other can be separated from their conversation is when their conversation is overheard or recorded by a third party. Yet while the content (*what*) being communicated in the friends' conversation can be captured objectively by a third party, it loses its personal significance for that third party as it is not being communicated *to* that party out of a committed relationship of love and trust.

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[68] M. Buber in *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1967) makes a similar point. There is a qualitative difference between relationships characterized by the use of the mutual personal pronouns "I and Thou" and relationships characterized by the pronouns "I and It."

The personal knowledge friends have of each other as so separated from their immediate conversation thus becomes depersonalized. It becomes knowledge that is a-*historical* (separated from the real time encounter of the friends), *abstract* (non-physical as it is separated from the spiritual/physical immediacy of personal communication between friends), and *objective* (a true account of what the friends say to each other but now expressible in terms that can be understood by any third party). Yet while such knowledge may be *objectively* true of what the friends reveal to each other about themselves, it is no longer *personally* true.

According to Macmurray, the personal significance or truth of what the friends share with each other in their conversation *includes* objectivity in so far as what the friends say to each other can be universally understood by anyone who understands the language it is expressed in. Yet the friends' *personal* knowledge of each other cannot be adequately understood simply as objectively true.[69] That "more" of personal knowledge is not expressible in objective terms!

Macmurray's more phenomenological analysis of the knowledge good friends share in conversation together can be understood as an advance on the classical view of friendship precisely in its phenomenological analysis of direct conversation between good friends, an analysis which does not exclude the possibility of a friendship with God.[70] But of even greater significance for a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends is that Macmurray's philosophy of friendship can help us appreciate the unique, supra-objective character of personal knowledge in direct conversation between good friends. This can help us appreciate the mystery of a personal knowledge of God in which we share through our active participation in the Eucharist, a knowledge which cannot be adequately expressed in third person terms from an objective point of view.

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[69] Cf. Macmurray, "The Form of the Personal," in *Persons in Relation*, 15–43.

[70] Macmurray, "The Personal Universe," in *Persons in Relation*, 206–224.

The Christian and Greco-Roman Traditions on Friendship and Conversation: Sources for a Mystagogy of the Eucharist

In our examination of friendship and conversation according to Aristotle as the representative of the Greco-Roman tradition on this subject, we noted that while there are features of Aristotle's philosophy which might help us in constructing a mystagogy of the Eucharist based on friendship and conversation, Aristotle's understanding of the nature of God and of a human relationship with God appears to disqualify his views on friendship and conversation from our consideration. For while God exists for Aristotle, God is unconcerned with human welfare and so completely transcends human nature such that there is no possibility of a friendship between the divine and human beings. A human relationship with such a God can only be one way. In Aristotle's view, God is simply the object of the natural human desire for happiness. In relation to such a God, good friends help each other in their striving to become, as far as they can be, like God by sharing a virtuous life together in conversation. But their relationship with God is egoistic insofar as God is the mere object of their striving for their own shared good. This understanding of the nature of God and of a human relationship with God is so radically deficient that it seems to prevent us from appealing to Aristotle and the Greco-Roman tradition in general in constructing a mystagogy of the Eucharist based on friendship and conversation between good friends.

However, in the Christian tradition as represented by St. Augustine's view of friendship, our understanding of God and relationship with God are radically transformed.

The Christian God is not a solitary intellectual monad without any concern for human beings; rather, God is the living personal mystery of love who reveals God's self as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in freely creating, redeeming, and sanctifying human beings, calling us into a relationship with God as a participation in God's own inner life of personal communion. According to Christian faith, God and human beings can be friends since God creates human beings in God's own

image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), and even when this friendship is severed by human sin, God throughout history never ceases to call human beings back to a friendship with God. Moreover, in the person of God's Son who takes on human nature for the redemption of humankind, God in Christ makes human nature the point of *similarity* between God and us so that Jesus can now call those who accept him his friends (Jn. 15:13–15) as well as, by his Spirit, share with them the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4) so that in the Spirit of Jesus we can call God "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:9–15). In Jesus Christ, God makes human beings capable of becoming God's friends.

This Christian understanding of God and our human relationship with God in Jesus Christ does not do away with the Greco-Roman tradition on friendship and conversation as represented by Aristotle's philosophy of friendship; rather, it can include what is acceptable in this tradition and take this up into its own synthesis.

In the light of this Christian faith understanding of God in the Christian tradition of friendship, let us revisit some of Aristotle's key insights into the nature of friendship and conversation between good friends to see if these insights, suitably reinterpreted, might now become a rich source for a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends.

First, as Aristotle maintained, we human beings are by nature both rational and social such that our natural fulfillment (happiness) consists in a life of virtuous activity *together* in community and especially in the virtuous activity of conversing together in a community of good friends. We can affirm these naturalistic insights from the perspective of the Christian faith by incorporating them into the higher viewpoint of faith. God has created human beings such that the natural human desire for happiness in virtuous living is ultimately the desire for a relationship with God (cf. Augustine's *Confessions* I.1). This natural desire for happiness in a relationship with God, though only partially satisfied in this life in a friendship with God through Jesus in the Spirit, brings with it the hope of its consummation in eternal life. As this friendship with God is actualized in conversation, our celebration of the Eucharist can thus be seen as a privileged example of such a

conversation as we listen to God speak to us in God's Word proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word and respond to God in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Second, Aristotle argued that the activity of conversation among good friends includes not simply a *verbal communication* of thoughts and feelings but an *exchange* of good *things* (e.g., gifts and personal services) as well. From the Christian perspective, such an understanding of conversation can be invoked to aid us in our understanding of the Eucharistic celebration as a sacramental activity that includes *both* verbal communication and an exchange of gifts with God.

Third, from Aristotle's account of conversation as the activity of friends sharing their consciousness of each other with each other in sharing what they value with each other, conversation can be understood as the way friends give *themselves* to one another. As we shall argue in the next chapter, this mutual self-giving in conversation between good friends is, by grace, exemplified in our celebration of the Eucharist. God gives God's self to us in God's Word and Spirit in transforming our gifts into Jesus Christ, and we give ourselves to God both in listening attentively to God speaking to us in God's Word and in our response in offering to God our gifts of bread and wine so that these (and we) might be transformed by God.

Fourth, as conversation for Aristotle is a *mutual* activity of the friends in *giving* themselves to one another, it is also, by implication, a mutual *receiving* from each other. Here too we can see, from a faith perspective, how mutual receiving between friends in their conversation can be applied by analogy to God's receiving from us our offering of bread and wine in memory of Jesus and our receiving Jesus from God in the transformation of those gifts.

Fifth, good friends, in the context of conversation, give and receive themselves in sharing what they most enjoy doing with each other. As Aristotle argues, shared activity is better (i.e., easier, more pleasant, and so more enduring) than solitary activity such that whatever virtuous activity the friends share together will be better than if each were to act alone. Since the very best of virtuous activities is contemplation,

the friends sharing their contemplation together is better than if they were to contemplate alone. Once again, from a faith perspective, this Aristotelian analysis can afford us, by analogy, an appreciation of the celebration of the Eucharist as a *community* activity of worship. The Eucharistic action as community worship is a *shared* activity of all the faithful as members of Christ's Body, the Church, in union with Jesus Christ her Head before the Father. As a graced community activity, the Eucharist is both more fully human and more fully divine than an individual activity of worship, for in *giving* greater *glory* to God by *manifesting* in a fuller way the mystery of the divine life of the Triune God as a community of friends, it is more naturally and supernaturally *fulfilling* of who we human beings are created to be.[71]

Finally, in acknowledging the importance of shared intimacy between friends in the thought of Aelred and of personal knowledge that good friends share with each other in John Macmurray, we have the basis for appreciating as personal knowledge the lived and experienced mystery of the Eucharist as a direct encounter with God

[71] The "glory of God" is a Biblical concept referring either to God or to the praise of God by God's creatures; cf. G. Kittel, "*doxa*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 233–235. Theologians have distinguished these two meanings of glory as that of being *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. The *intrinsic* glory of God refers to God in God's self—glory that is subject neither to increase or diminution. The *extrinsic* glory of God is the manifestation of God's *intrinsic* glory in God's creation. Cf. D. Her, "The Glory of God (End of Creation)," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. VI (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press/McGraw Hill, 1967), 514–515.

Aristotle's naturalist explanation for why giving is better than receiving and, therefore, why it is more characteristic of friends to give rather than to receive affection may, from a human perspective, help us understand Jesus's words to St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). As it is more blessed to give than to receive, the Eucharistic Prayer as sacrifice in union with Christ before the Father is the summit of the Eucharistic celebration (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003], 78) rather than our reception of him in sacramental communion (cf. *MD* 562–563, DS 3854).

in conversation, a knowledge which cannot be adequately captured in third person objective knowledge and language.

In this preliminary sketch of some of the implications Aristotle's insights into conversation can have for our understanding of the Eucharist from within the Christian tradition of friendship as represented by St. Augustine, we are able to see that a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends can be all the more compelling if it can include—as properly interpreted in the light of faith—experiences and insights on friendship from human traditions that are not explicitly Christian. In the following chapter, we will put our mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends into practice by examining and commenting on the two great moments of the Eucharistic action—the Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist. In doing so, we will appeal not only to some of the insights of the Christian and Greco-Roman (and other human) traditions on friendship and conversation but to our own experiences and intuitions as well, for reflecting on our own experiences of conversation among good friends can help us more personally appreciate the Eucharist and thus give ourselves more fully in its celebration by offering ourselves with Jesus to God.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, however, it would do well to recall that while a mystagogy of the Eucharist can be based on our human experience of and reflection on friendship and conversation between good friends, the Christian understanding of our friendship and conversation with God will always be expressed in *analogical* terms, and for the following reasons.

First, our basic and normal experience of conversation between friends involves our *bodily presence* in immediate encounter, especially in immediate face-to-face encounter where the friends can physically hear each other speak and touch each other. While it is true that good friends can carry on conversation via media that does not involve this direct physical contact, our use of these other media is never enough for us; indeed, we use them as ways of prolonging our physical contact with each other with the hope of renewing that physical contact in

the future. Thus, our friendship and conversation with God is also through direct physical contact of sight, sound, and touch, albeit in an analogical sense.

Second, in our experience of conversation between friends, we share a complete equality of nature with one another such that either friend can *initiate* conversation as well as *respond to* the other friend's invitation to converse. Our conversation with God can be so described but only analogically, for if we are indeed made partakers of the divine nature by grace, we are not equal to God by nature. We human beings as such are not on the same "level" with God. We cannot inter-act with God *as* human friends can inter-act with each other. God is our *Creator* who gives us being, life, intellect, and the very ability to act freely as we would. And so, should we desire to initiate a conversation with God, our very desire to do so would *already* be a *response* to God as the giver of all we have and are.

Third, we are limited in our experience of human friendships to a certain number of friends whom we can meet and converse with regularly. In the Eucharistic action, we as a large group of believers enter a conversation with God as with our friend. We do so transformed by the Spirit into Christ's Body united with Christ our Head in speaking to the Father. In the Eucharistic celebration, we enter into the intimate conversation between God the Father and his Son Jesus as between divine friends. This conversation is *truer* than what we normally experience in our human friendships, although it can be understood to be so only by faith and described only analogically by appealing to our normal human experience of conversation among friends.

This analogical way of speaking about the Eucharist—as a conversation between God and ourselves as between good friends based on faith—must be kept in mind as we proceed with our mystagogy of the Eucharist.

3

The Eucharistic Celebration as a Conversation Between God and Us as Between Good Friends

According to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Eucharistic celebration or Sacrifice of the Holy Mass is made up of two parts—the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist—which are so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship.[72] According to a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation, we can understand the Eucharistic celebration as a conversation between God and us which, like all conversation, involves both listening and responding. In the Liturgy of the Word, God speaks to us as to God's friends; in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we respond to our Friend. Understanding the Eucharist in this way can help us more actively participate in its celebration.

The Liturgy of the Word

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [*GIRM*] provides a general description of the Liturgy of the Word and its celebration:

[72] *SC* 56.

> The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. The homily, Profession of Faith and Prayer of the Faithful, however, develop and conclude this part of the Mass. For in the readings, as explained by the homily, God speaks to [God's] people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation and offering them spiritual nourishment, and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful by his word. By their silence and singing the people make God's word their own and they also affirm their adhesion to it by means of the Profession of Faith. Finally, having been nourished by it, they pour out their petition in the Prayer of the Faithful for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the world.[73]

As the Second Vatican Council Fathers remind us in the document *Dei Verbum*, by God's revelation "the invisible God, from the fullness of [God's] love, addresses [human persons] as [God's] friends, and moves among them, in order to invite them into [God's] company."[74] In terms of our mystagogy of the Eucharist, we can understand the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word as initializing a conversation between God and us as between good friends by our listening to God speak to us and responding to God in prayer.

God initiates the conversation by calling us to assemble in Jesus. The Liturgy of the Word as the commencement of a conversation begins with God's invitation. As Jesus tells his disciples in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws [them]" (Jn. 6:44, 56). Our very presence at the Holy Mass, which allows us to listen to God speak to us in the Liturgy of the Word, depends on the Father first calling us to assemble. We experience this call in the inspired *desire each one has* to assemble *together* to listen to God speak and to celebrate the Eucharist in memory of Jesus. Since it is the Holy Spirit who guides us to Jesus (Jn. 15:26; 16:13–14), our desire to assemble in Jesus is, by implication, our experience of the Father leading us by the Spirit to his Son. In this desire, the Spirit jogs our *memory* of what Jesus has done for us and awakens our *hope* that,

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[73] *GIRM* 55.

[74] *DV* 2, DS 4202; cf. *CCC* 142–143.

in obeying his command to remember what he has done for us, we might strengthen our relationship with him and with one another in him. Yet it is up to each one of us to *allow* that desire to *actually* move us to assemble in Jesus's name. If we allow this graced desire to move us to make the sacrifice in a personal choice to come together, we are answering the Father's call to assemble in Jesus's name.

In a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between good friends, this call of the Father to assemble can be understood as God's invitation to renew our friendship with God by joining God in conversation. We know through our own experience of friendship what it is like both to invite and to be invited into conversation with friends. As good friends are usually eager to come together to renew their friendship in conversation, they are usually eager both to invite and to be invited by each other to do so. Yet we also know through experience that there can be circumstances that make it difficult for friends to come together and converse. While one friend may invite the other, the invited friend may be involved at that time with important and pressing family or professional responsibilities such that she or he cannot accept the invitation. Or the invited friend may feel too tired or preoccupied to accept her or his friend's invitation. In either case, if these external and internal circumstances prevent the invited friend from accepting their friend's invitation to conversation, no conversation takes place. They remain friends but their friendship is not advanced as they do not have the opportunity to renew their acquaintance and share what is happening in their lives with each other. Should external or internal circumstances continue to prevent the friends from engaging in conversation, their friendship will invariably weaken. While they may continue to maintain pleasant memories of each other, without continued conversation their friendship is no longer being realized in action and gradually becomes more of a memory than a living reality in their lives.

From this common experience of the importance of continued regular conversation in human friendship, we may better understand the significance of the Father's call to us to assemble in Jesus's name to celebrate the Eucharist as the invitation of one friend to another

to renew their friendship in conversation. If we accept the Father's invitation by choosing to assemble in Jesus's name, we choose to renew our friendship with God (and with each other in God); should we refuse the invitation, we weaken that friendship. And if our refusal to accept the Father's invitation is without adequate reason, that refusal can seriously damage the friendship and, should it continue, destroy it altogether. Thankfully, since God is forever the faithful friend even if we human beings are not, our friendship with God can be renewed even after we seriously damage it if we acknowledge our failings and sins before God and ask for God's forgiveness with the firm intention of renewing the friendship through God's grace.

Moreover, should each of us accept the Father's invitation to assemble together in Jesus's name to celebrate the Eucharist, we thereby choose to renew our friendship with the Father *in Jesus as Church*, for Jesus, as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* teaches,

> is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations … He is present … when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).[75]

Friendship as we have seen in Aristotle requires a unity of nature and interest among the friends as equals. And while friendship can include a number of friends, this number is limited to those who can meet and converse regularly with each other. In the Eucharistic celebration, our unity in Jesus as Church before the Father is the unity that is necessary for our being friends with the Father and with one another (our celebration of the Greeting of Peace before Holy Communion is the liturgical action expressive of our friendship with each other in Jesus). And though we cannot become intimate friends with everyone in the Church as assembled, much less in the assembly of the Church throughout the world, we have, as St. Augustine pointed out, the experience of the *beginnings* of a universal friendship here and now with the faithful in our assembly and the eschatological hope of being intimate friends together with all the faithful when

[75] *SC* 7, DS 4007.

we celebrate the eternal Eucharist of God in heaven.[76] For Aristotle, it will be recalled, human friendship in the complete sense cannot possibly extend to include many people; in God, however, all things are possible for it is the presence and power of the Spirit of the God of Jesus Christ among us in the Eucharistic celebration that enables us to be friends with the Father and with one another in Jesus; this, as Augustine maintains, is the beginning of an eschatological friendship of all in God.

Once each of us responds to the Father's call to assemble in the name of Jesus, His Son, Christ is among us uniting us as friends with the Father and with one another. We are now ready to listen to the Father speak to us as His friends in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

The Proclamation of the Word: The Father speaks His Word to us. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council Fathers teach that when Sacred Scripture is read and meditated on, and especially when the Scriptures are proclaimed in the liturgy, God the Father meets and speaks to us[77] through Jesus, his Word,[78] with the voice of the Holy Spirit[79] so that God gives God's self in speaking to us. Our proper reception of this divine gift of self requires an obedience of faith (Rom. 13:26), an obedience which

> "is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which [the human person] commits [her or his] whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals," and freely assenting to the truth revealed by [God]. To make this act of faith, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving "joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it." To bring about an ever deeper understanding of

[76] Cf. *above* pp. 29–32.

[77] *DV* 21, DS 4228.

[78] *SC* 7, DS 4007.

[79] *SC* 21, DS 4021.

> revelation the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by [the Spirit's] gifts.[80]

When we listen with obedient faith to the Scriptures proclaimed in the liturgy, we receive God's gift of God's self. The human words of Scripture become a sacramental sign and efficacious means of God speaking to us.[81] Because of this, as the Council Fathers declare,

> the Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body.[82]

God gives God's self to us in speaking to us through the human words of Scripture proclaimed in the assembly and received in faith. The background of this faith understanding of God's word and of our reception of God in that word is the Biblical understanding of the word of God (*dabhar yhvh*) and its reception in knowledge (*iadah*).

"Word"—*dabhar* in ancient Hebrew—denotes a certain concrete reality, action, or event.[83] The word so understood is an almost tangible

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[80] *DV* 5, DS 4205.

[81] According to theological opinion, an act of faith in receiving the Word of God with reverence confers grace and salvation not only *ex opera operantis*—in proportion to the intensity of the act—but also *ex opera operato*, for God reveals God's self to us in Scripture in the Church since it is in the Church that the Word of God is found in the living tradition between minister and recipient, as is the case for the celebration of the sacraments. A faith-filled reception of God's Word confers a sacramental character morally, or intentionally, on the hearer and even has a kind of physical dimension as in the case of St. Augustine, who traced his conversion to his reading of a passage from St. Paul's letter to the Romans (*Conf.* VIII), or St. Antony the Great, who experienced his conversion upon hearing the Gospel parable of the rich young man proclaimed during the liturgy; cf. J. Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and the Mystery of the Eucharist* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 145–147.

[82] *DV* 21, DS 4228.

[83] The etymological meaning of *dabhar* seems to be something like "a dynamic and energetic motion forward from that which is behind"; cf. J. Bergman,

presence of the *one who speaks* that word. The Biblical word of God is a powerful and dynamic presence of God in the world and in salvation history. By speaking God's word, God reveals and, in a certain sense, *gives* God's self. In the Old Testament, God's word is covenantal, prophetic, creative, wise, and ultimately an *almost* personal reality.[84] In the New Testament, God's Word *is* the person of God's eternal Son (Heb. 1:1–4) who, as the Word, is made flesh in Jesus (Jn. 1:1–18). God speaks *personally* to us in speaking Jesus, God's Word made flesh, to us.

The Biblical *response* to the *dabhar* is knowledge (in the Hebrew Bible, *iadah*; in the LXX, *gnosis*), a reception of the word that involves the spiritual as well as physical dimensions of the human being.[85] In receiving God's personal revelation of God's self in God's Word made flesh (Jn. 1:12; cf. Acts 8:14), our knowledge effectively moves us (1 Thess. 2:13) to bring that Word to fulfillment in our lives (Matt. 7:24). Our *knowledge* of God in Jesus Christ is our *being known* by God in Christ before all ages (Rom. 8:29; cf. Eph. 1:3–10) so that in coming to know

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H. Lutzmann, & W. Schmidt, "*dabhar*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. III (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), 84–125.

[84] The *covenantal* word of God is manifested in the "ten words" or commandments Moses received from God (Ex. 34:28; Dt. 4:13, 10:4). The *prophetic* word of God is based on the covenantal word, calling Israel back to the covenant. The prophetic word was experienced by the prophets as a powerful force, even a burden (Jer. 1:4–10) which the prophet could not escape (Amos 3:8; Micah 3:8; Jer. 6:16, 20:7–9). Later, in Israel's development of faith, God's word was understood to be God's *creative action* (Gen. 1, 2; Isa. 40:12, 22, 48:13) and the *wisdom* by which God creates (Prov. 8:27–30, Sir. 1:1–8, Wis. 9:9, 10:1–11:1). The *personification* of God's word is a very late development (Wis. 18:14–16).

[85] For the Biblical sense of knowledge as a personal response to God's word in the Hebrew and the early Christian traditions, cf. L. Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963, reprint 1968), esp. 16–20 and 237–255. Also cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharist* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 30–40 and L. Bouyer, *Gnosis: la conoscenza di Dio nella Scrittura* (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), esp. 130–140.

God in Jesus Christ we come to *know as we are known*, a process that culminates in our seeing God face to face (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12).

As God speaks the Divine Person of God's Word made flesh in speaking to us and our graced reception of that Word is free, the knowledge we have of God, which is God's knowledge of us in God's Son, is a profoundly personal knowledge we share with each other. This personal knowledge we have of God in God's knowledge of us is an experience of God calling us by our name.

In the Bible, the name (*shem*) expresses the reality of what is named.[86] In the LXX and the New Testament, the Greek word *onoma* is almost always used for the Hebrew *shem*, and the Greek verb "to call" (*kalein*) is used to express addressing and being addressed by name,[87] often by God as a vocation for mission.[88]

In personal relationships, the name denotes the *identity* of the person named, thereby *establishing* the person's identity. Knowing each others' names, and addressing and being addressed by our names, we come to have a personal knowledge of each other—knowing as we are known. The name of the personal mystery of God (*shem Yahweh*)

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[86] H. Bietenhard, "*onoma*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. V (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 252–281. The Hebrew word *shem* originally denoted an external mark to distinguish one person or thing from others. It thus means "name," *nomen proprium*. *Shem* can also be used to refer to the acts of the persons mentioned, and in this sense can mean either "good" or "bad" and, in the abstract, "repute" or "esteem." *Shem* can also mean "memory," "remembrance," or "fame" even after death. Cf. Bietenhard, "*onoma*," 252.

[87] Bietenhard, "*onoma*," 261–264. "To call by name" in Ex. 31:2 is rendered *anakekleimai ex onomatos*; cf. Ex. 35:30, Num. 1:17. "By their name" is *ex onomaton autov* in Num. 3:17; cf. 32:42: *ek tou onomatos autou*. The accusative occurs in Is. 43:1: *ekakesa se to onoma sou*; cf. 45:3. But the dative is used in Is. 45:4: *kaleso se to onomati sou*. "To call on Yahweh" can be rendered in transition in the LXX: *epikaleisthai to onoma*; cf. Gen. 4:26, 13:4, 21:33, 26:25, Psalms 78:6, 79:18, 104:1, 114:4, 115:4, Is. 64:6, Jer. 10:25.

[88] Cf. K. Schmidt, "*kaleo*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. III (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 487–491.

in the Hebrew Scriptures was originally (as well as after the Exile) the name of One who reveals Himself to be called upon by His people, in order that He might *bless* them, *protect* them, and be *present* to them in many different ways.[89]

If God reveals God's name to God's people, thereby establishing God's identity *for them*, God also gives some individuals their names to express their unique vocations. Abram, for instance, is named "Abraham" (Gen. 17:5), establishing him as the father of many nations, and the Word made flesh is named "Jesus" or Savior (Yahweh saves) (Mt. 1:21; Lk. 1:31) and "Emmanuel" or God with us (Mt. 1:23). Jesus himself gives names to *individual* disciples (Simon as "Peter" and James and John as "Boanerges") *as well as* to the *group*, e.g., "apostles"—those whom Jesus *sends* (Lk. 6:13–14; cf. Mk. 3:13–19)—or even "friends" (Jn. 15:13–16). Jesus's call is a divine gift of a vocation in being personally addressed (cf. Mt. 4:21; 9:9) whether individually or in a community. The divine act of naming, then, is a creative activity transforming those named. The graced *response* to being named by Jesus is to call on the name of the Father (Jn. 16:23–24, 26) (or on Jesus) in Jesus's name (Jn. 14:13).

It is the Father who reveals our name to us in Jesus by addressing Jesus as "My Beloved Son," and it is Jesus who reveals God's name to us as "Our Father" in revealing to us that God is *his Father*.[90] Thus, *in* Jesus we address God by God's name, "Our Father," and God addresses us by our name, "My Beloved Son/Daughter."

In the Liturgy of the Word, as we listen in obedient faith to the Father speak Jesus, his Word made flesh to us, we hear the Father address us as His beloved daughters and sons in Jesus. As the Father recreated us in Jesus by the Spirit in baptism, first calling us by name

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[89] Bietenhard, "*onoma*," 258.

[90] Cf. Mk. 1:11, Lk. 3:22. Jesus refers to God as "Father" or "My Father" (e.g., Jn. 15:1–17, 20:17) and addresses God in prayer in the same way (e.g., Matt. 11:33, Jn. 17) while he instructs us to think of God as our Father (Jn. 20:17) and pray to Him accordingly (e.g., Matt. 6:6–15) in his (Jesus's) name (Jn. 16:16); cf. I. de la Potterie, *La preghiera di Gesu* (Roma: Casa Editrice, 1992).

as "My Beloved Son/Daughter" in "His Beloved Son" such that we became members of God's Beloved Body the Church, the Father now addresses us assembled in Jesus as His daughters and sons, *renewing* us in our identity and vocation in speaking His Word to us. And when we respond to the Father addressing us in Jesus by our calling God by name, God and we share *personal knowledge* (*iadah*; *gnosis*) of each other.

While this inter-personal knowledge between God and us in celebrating the Liturgy of the Word is a mystery of faith which transcends human experience, *one* way we might *approach* this mystery is by appealing to our experience and understanding of human friendship as an analogy, one that allows us to see this personal knowledge as the fruit of a conversation between God and us as between good friends.

Conversation between good friends begins with one of the friends addressing the other by name. Because good friends know and love each other, when they address each other by name they do so out of knowledge of and love for each other. In beginning a conversation, the friends who address each other by name experience themselves as known and loved in hearing their name pronounced by their friend. There is no more affectively moving experience friends have than that of hearing themselves *being addressed* by their name in being known and loved—except (as Aristotle would remind us) actually *addressing* each other by name out of knowledge of and love for each other.

If in the Liturgy of the Word it is the Father who initiates the conversation by addressing us in speaking his Word to us, the Father does this sacramentally through physical signs. Our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word has for a sacramental character a physical as well as intellectual/spiritual action initiated by God. The physical nature of the action includes physical *things*, such as the Book of Readings and, in particular, the Book of the Gospels, the candles, the incense boat and incense, the acclamations voiced or sung, the accompanying instrumental music, and physical *persons*—the lector of the readings, the priest or deacon who reads the Gospel, and the congregation assembled around its reading. God the Father meets and speaks with us through these physical realities and it is by means of these realities that we can physically as well as spiritually receive His Word.

The sacramental character of our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word as this spiritual/physical action may be better appreciated if we relate this to our experience of conversation among good friends.

Conversation among good friends is initiated by their addressing each other by name—an address that is a *physical* as *well* as spiritual encounter. While friends can address each other by name at a distance through various electronic media, the most satisfying experience of being so addressed is when the friends are physically *with* each other so that they can see, hear, and actually touch each other in a face-to-face encounter.

Hearing ourselves addressed by name in listening to the Father speak His Word to us in the Liturgy of the Word is analogous to being addressed by name by a good friend. While we cannot see God, we can, by God's Spirit working in and through the physical realities involved in the Liturgy and our inspired reception of God in faith, hear God as God speaks to us in the proclamation of the word and especially the Gospel. God speaks through the priest or deacon reading the Gospel analogous to the way the good friend speaks to us through their facial expression, the sound of their voice, and the touch of their hand. The analogy is deficient, of course, as God does not have a body as our friend has. Nevertheless, as God *creates* the physical realities by which God speaks God's Word to us, God can be intimately present to us as Creator through these means in a way that transcends the physical immediacy human friends enjoy in their face-to-face encounter with each other. Moreover, analogous to the personal knowledge good friends have of each other in their conversation with each other in love and trust, a knowledge that transcends objectification, the immediacy of God's presence in the proclamation of God's Word to those who listen in obedient faith cannot be appreciated by those without that faith. Divine immediacy as such can be appreciated only in living faith, hope, and love.

Yet in our experience, even if good friends can physically hear each other address one another by name, they still have to make the effort to *listen* so they can realize that they are being called by name out of knowledge and love. As important as physical immediacy between

friends is, it does not guarantee spiritual intimacy. Despite their good intentions, there might be circumstances beyond the friends' control (physical events) as well as their own physical and moral weaknesses (e.g., fatigue, culpable inattention, or even willful refusal to listen) that can easily prevent them from actually hearing themselves being addressed by each other out of knowledge and love. These involuntary and voluntary difficulties need to be overcome if the friends are to listen to each other and enter into a real conversation together. In an analogous way, if we are to hear the Father address us in Christ as His beloved in speaking His Word to us in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, we need to prepare ourselves to listen to Him with obedient faith.

The proper celebration of the introductory rites to the Liturgy of the Word, which include the Penitential Rite and the *Gloria*, can help prepare us to listen with obedient faith to God speak to us in our celebration of the liturgy. In the Penitential Rite at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration, we acknowledge that we are sinners in need of God's mercy and forgiveness in Christ (cf. 1 Jn. 1:8–2:2). In *giving* ourselves to God by participating sincerely in the Penitential Rite, we admit our need and ask for God's mercy and forgiveness. In recognizing our sins and failures and asking God for God's mercy and forgiveness, we receive from God mercy and forgiveness and in this way experience for ourselves anew that God is love and mercy in our being *loved* and *forgiven* by God *in Christ*. The graced response to this forgiveness is *gratitude* and the desire to express this gratitude in *praise*.[91] In this way, we are led to give ourselves to celebrating the *Gloria*. Thus, in *giving* God the thankful praise God deserves as our Savior, we *receive* the grace of putting God at the center of our consciousness in gratitude. We are now ready to listen with obedient faith to God speaking to us in the Liturgy of the Word.

[91] For the semantic relationship between praise and thanksgiving in the New Testament, cf. J. Neyrey, "Lost in Translation: Did It Matter If Christians 'Thanked' God or 'Gave God Glory'?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71:1 (2009): 1–23.

Nevertheless, we can experience distractions, weak as we are, even after participating sincerely in the Penitential Rite and the *Gloria* such that we are no longer listening attentively to God speak to us in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. The *GIRM* can be helpful here—according to the *Instruction*, the Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated reverently, that is, without haste, and should include appropriate periods of silence—especially before the Liturgy of the Word begins, for in this silence we are better able to recollect ourselves to receive the Word and meditate upon it.[92] The extent to which we can do this will be in large measure the extent to which we will be receptive to God speaking to us in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

In addition to following these liturgical instructions on maintaining silence, we can also avail ourselves of the experiential wisdom of the saints to help us be attentive to the voice of God in celebrating the Liturgy of the Word. For example, we might appeal to St. Ignatius Loyola, who in his *Spiritual Exercises* gives those who go through these exercises certain instructions on how to approach God in prayer.[93] Making use of these instructions for preparing ourselves in personal prayer can be helpful in our listening to God speak to us in the Liturgy of the Word.

Preparation is crucial for sincere prayer. For Ignatius, this preparation consists first in our praying to God "that all [our] intentions, actions, and operations, may be directed purely to the praise and service of the Divine Majesty."[94] Praise and thanksgiving to God should be our ultimate motivation in prayer, and if we have celebrated the Penitential Rite properly, our experience of God's mercy should give us that motivation as we prepare ourselves to listen to God speak to us. Nevertheless, we still need, because of our human weakness, to continue making a conscious effort in preparing our hearts in praise and gratitude to receive God's Word in obedient faith.

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[92] *GIRM* 56.

[93] *SpEx* 3, 73–81.

[94] *SpEx* 46; cf. 55, 62, 65, 91, 101.

Second, Ignatius counsels us to use our imagination in forming a mental representation of what we are meditating on whenever we use Scripture in prayer.[95] By giving ourselves as fully as we can to God in exercising not simply our intellect and will but also our imagination and emotions, this mental representation will help open us to the Spirit while we meditate over a Scripture passage. Applying this counsel to our listening to God speak to us in the Liturgy of the Word, we exercise all our faculties in listening to the Scriptures proclaimed; to do this, however, we will need to prepare ourselves before coming to the Eucharistic celebration by taking some time in prayer to read and meditate over the passages of Scripture to be proclaimed.

Third, Ignatius counsels us to prepare for prayer by asking God for what we desire.[96] By considering what we want when approaching God in prayer, we focus our attention on what we are doing—or at least what we want to be doing—and ask God to help us. In asking God for what we desire—to hear the Father speak to us—it is also important to call on God in the name of Jesus (Jn. 14:13; 16:23–24, 26; cf. Isa. 55:6) at least silently, in our hearts, if we cannot do so out loud. Because the name of God is in a mysterious way God in God's self, calling on God's name in reverent faith places God explicitly at the center of our hearts and opens us to God's presence and grace. By calling on God's name in our hearts, we are already in dialogue with God and this disposes us to hear God address us in the proclamation of the Scriptures.

Finally, Ignatius recommends that we take some time to *reverence* God before we begin our prayer.[97] Reverencing God means acknowledging God as our Lord and Master and opening our hearts and minds to God in loving respect and obedience. This act of reverence is an act of faith and love and disposes us to receive God's Spirit so that we can listen to the Father speak to us in the reading of the Scriptures at Mass.

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[95] *SpEx* 47; cf. 55, 62, 91, 103.

[96] *SpEx* 48, 104, 113, 139, 152, 193, 203, 221, 233.

[97] *SpEx* 75; cf. 3.

Indeed, while a liturgical respect for external silence before celebrating the Liturgy of the Word is important, it is not enough. Without an internal silence of heart, we will not hear God speak to us no matter how quiet our external surroundings are. Through an internal act of reverence before God, we allow God to create an inner silence of the heart that is ready to receive God as God speaks to us. By doing our best to cooperate with God's grace in preparing to hear God speak to us, we can with Samuel sincerely say, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (Sam. 3:10).

By listening in obedient faith, then, to the proclamation of God's Word in the first two readings, and participating in the psalm response and Gospel acclamation, we allow the Spirit to prepare us so we can listen to the Father speak his Word to us in the proclamation of the Gospel, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word.

In the proclamation of the Gospel, the Father speaks his Word *to* us by speaking to us *about* his Word. Jesus Christ, the Father's Word to us, is both God's self-communication and the message God wants to impart to us, as the Council Fathers teach in *Dei Verbum*:

> In [God's] goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal [God's self] and to make known to us the hidden purpose of [God's] will by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, [women and men] might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature.… By this revelation … the deepest truth about God and the salvation of [the human race] shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.[98]

The Father speaks His Word Jesus and about His Word Jesus to us in the proclamation of the Gospel. We can understand something of this mystery by analogy with our experience of conversation among human friends, for in conversation among good friends, the friends share *themselves* with each other in sharing something *about* themselves with each other.[99] In an analogous way, the Father gives Himself to

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[98] *DV* 2, DS 4202.

[99] Aelred's emphasis on self-disclosure among spiritual friends; cf. *Spiritual Friendship*, 20–21.

us in speaking Jesus His beloved Son to us *by* speaking *about* Jesus to us. And as in human friendship where the friend receives her or his friend's gift of self in receiving her or his friend's disclosure about themselves, so in an analogous way do we receive the Father's gift of Himself as we listen to Him speak to us about Jesus.

Human friends, by their mutual *affection*, are able to receive each other in receiving each other's self-disclosure. In the Liturgy of the Word, we are able to receive the Father's gift of Himself in Jesus by the action of the *Holy Spirit*, for it is by the Spirit that we listen, in obedient faith, to the Father speak to us in and through the sensible signs of the Scriptures read, the book of the Gospel proclaimed, the person of the priest as representative of Christ the teacher, the congregation as Christ's Body the Church seen, and the human words of proclamation and preaching heard.[100]

Let us take the proclamation of the First Sunday of Ordinary Time—the account of Christ's baptism—as an example of the Spirit working so that the Father speaks to us through the words of the Gospel proclaimed and preached. Consider this pericope:

> When all the people were baptized, and Jesus was at prayer after likewise being baptized, the skies opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in the visible form of a dove. A voice from heaven was heard to say: "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests." (Lk. 3:21–22)

By hearing this Gospel account proclaimed in obedient faith inspired by the Spirit, we hear the Father speak His Word to us as He speaks to us about Jesus. As we listen to the words of the Gospel proclaimed, the Spirit moves us to form an image of the event so that we are able to contemplate the persons involved, especially Jesus himself as he experiences baptism in the Jordan. Led by the Spirit,

[100] Cf. CCC 1154: "To nourish the faith of believers, the signs which accompany the Word of God should be emphasized: the book of the Word (a lectionary or a book of the Gospels), its veneration (procession, incense, candles), the place of its proclamation (lectern or ambo), its audible and intelligible reading, the minister's homily which extends its proclamation, and the responses of the assembly (acclamations, meditation psalms, litanies, and profession of faith)."

we are able to picture Christ at the Jordan, the skies open, the Spirit descending upon him as a dove, and imaginatively *hear* the Father's voice.

This inspired imaginative picture of the baptism of the Lord is only the beginning, however. Guided by the Spirit, we may be led to place ourselves with Jesus as he stands on the bank of the Jordan, to be *with* him as *he* sees the Spirit descend upon him and hears the Father say to him, "You are my beloved Son." Indeed, we may even be led by the Spirit to enter imaginatively into Jesus's consciousness—into his heart—to *feel* what he *feels* as he hears the Father say to him, "*You* are *my beloved Son*. I am *pleased* with you!" By the Spirit, we may be graced to experience in some way what that must have been like for Jesus to hear his Father speak to him in this way.

By entering imaginatively into the Gospel setting and standing with Jesus, we will also be led by the Spirit to reflect on the significance of this experience for ourselves. In the Gospel passage above, for instance, we will be led to reflect on the significance of Jesus's baptism for ourselves. In this reflection, we may be led to imagine what it would feel like if we heard our own human father say to us, "My son/daughter, I love you, I am pleased—I am *proud* of you!" How we would feel in being so addressed by our fathers may well help us imagine what it must have felt like for Jesus to be addressed in this way by his Father. But these are the very words God the Father addresses *to us* as we stand with and in Jesus. By the Holy Spirit, then, we come to realize that the Father's words to Jesus are spoken to us as well. If we can listen to the Father speak to us as He speaks to Jesus and *savor* being addressed by God in this way, we come in some way to know (*gnosis*) the Father in Jesus as we are known by the Father in Jesus.

Our hearing of the Father's Word in the proclamation of the readings and especially in the Gospel so we may realize that the Father is speaking *to us* can be aided immeasurably by a reverent reading and proclamation of the Word by the lectors, deacon, and priest, and by the subsequent homily which can help all the faithful meditate on key points of what they had just heard. This reverent proclamation of the Word of God requires that these ministers of the Word make sufficient time to pray over the readings beforehand to make the words

they are to read a part of themselves, while at the same time asking God to make them God's mouthpiece so that the Father might speak His Word through them. And the homily requires of the priest that he take the time to prepare for preaching God's Word in such a way that both the people and himself might better appreciate it, that they may put into practice what God is saying to them. For this ministry of the Word, lectors, deacons, and priests can benefit in both their reading and preaching by taking the time to follow Ignatius's suggestions on preparing for prayer as outlined above in their own preparation for their respective ministries.

This careful preparation of the Liturgy of the Word by its ministers—who are called to proclaim and preach that Word—and by the people (including the ministers)—who are called to hear that Word in obedient faith—enables all God's people to realize the Father's love for us in Jesus Christ. We will realize, with St. John, that

> God's love was revealed in our midst in this way: [God] sent [God's] only Son to the world that we might have life through him. Love, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God, but that [God] has loved us and has sent [God's] Son as an offering for our sins. (1 Jn. 4:9–10)

This realization that it is God who first loves us in Christ impels us to love God in Christ, as St. Paul writes:

> The love of Christ impels us who have reached the conviction that since one died for all, all died. He died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sakes died and was raised up. (2 Cor. 5:14–15)

And, as John adds, we realize that if we are to love God, we are to love one another as well:

> Beloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another … whoever loves God must also love [their sister and brother]. (1 Jn. 4:11, 21)

Thus, in listening to God the Father speak His Word to us, we come to know the love of God in Christ, and this knowledge empowers us to love God and one another. Our experience of conversation

between good friends can help us approach this dynamic of grace from a human perspective.

When good friends share themselves with one another in conversation as they speak together of what they love, their love for each other impels them to continue conversing with each other regularly, and if one of the things they share with each other is their concern for the welfare of others (as is characteristic of virtuous people), their love for each other will also impel them to work together for the welfare of others. By analogy, the Father, in speaking His Word to us in the Liturgy of the Word, speaks not only of His love for Jesus and us in Jesus but also of His love for *all* men and women in Jesus so that, when we by obedient faith hear Him speak His Word to us, we realize how much the Father loves us and all men and women in Jesus. We then feel impelled to respond to this revelation of divine love by giving ourselves to God in praise and thanksgiving and to others in generous service so that more may join us in praise of and thanksgiving to the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor. 9:12–15).

Our Response to the Father's Word: Recitation of the Creed and Prayers of the Faithful. This Spirit-inspired dynamic of receiving God's Word (Jesus) from the Father in obedient faith, and of being impelled to respond by speaking Jesus back to the Father in praise and thanksgiving and sharing Jesus with others, leads the faithful to celebrate the concluding rites of the Liturgy of the Word—the Profession of Faith in the recitation of the Creed and the Prayers of the Faithful.

The *GIRM* describes our Profession of Faith and the Prayers of the Faithful within the Liturgy of the Word in these terms:

> The purpose of the *Symbolum* or Profession of Faith, or Creed, is that the whole gathered people may respond to the Word of God proclaimed in the readings taken from Sacred Scripture and explained in the homily and that they may also call to mind and confess the great mysteries of the faith.…[101]

[101] *GIRM* 67.

> In the Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in a certain way to the Word of God which they have welcomed in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of the world.[102]

In a mystagogy of the Liturgy of the Word as a conversation between God and us, the celebration of the profession of faith and prayers of the faithful can be viewed as our response to the self-revelation of our divine friend's love for *all* of us in Jesus Christ. Our response is to return God's love in Christ by offering God praise and thanksgiving and praying for the salvation of the world in Jesus's name. In so doing, we accept the Father's invitation to join Him in conversation and begin a genuine conversation with Him.

However, our conversation at this point has only begun. Responding to the Father's invitation to converse by giving ourselves to Him in thanksgiving and prayer in Jesus's name is not enough, for Jesus has specially commanded us to remember him and all that God has done for us in him by celebrating a sacrifice in the context of a sacramental meal in his honor: "Do this in memory of Me" (1 Cor. 12:23–25; Lk. 22:17–20; cf. Mt. 26:27–28; Mk. 14:22–23). Our complete response to God's love for us in Jesus Christ is not exhausted in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word; rather, our desire to respond fully to God's love for us in Christ impels us to give ourselves to God by offering Jesus to God in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, in obedience to Christ's command to do this in memory of him.

God inspires us to respond to God's love for us in Christ by giving ourselves to God in our offering of Jesus to God, and this not only in our prayer but also in our commemoration of all that God has done for us in Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist as sacramental sacrifice. Our experience of conversation among good friends as analyzed by Aristotle may help us in appreciating the Eucharist as the full response to God's love for us in Christ.

As Aristotle explained, conversation between good friends consists in a communication of the friends' love for each other in their sharing

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[102] *GIRM* 69 (italics added).

of thoughts and feelings in activities they enjoy most as well as of material goods and personal services with each other. While verbal communication is an important aspect of conversation, it does not exhaust conversation, for good friends communicate with each other in sharing activities as well as material goods and personal services.

As conversation between good friends consists not simply in verbal communication but also in shared activities and an exchange of material gifts and personal services, so too does our reception of God's gift of self in Jesus Christ in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word prompt a response which cannot be satisfied simply by a verbal communication of our love for God through the profession of our faith and offering of our prayers for the salvation of the world. We as God's friends are impelled to respond to our friend by communicating our love for God in the form of an activity (the Eucharistic Prayer) which is not only a verbal communication of our love in thanking the Father for Jesus Christ but also includes offering Him gifts (bread and wine) in memory of Jesus—as Jesus himself has commanded us to do.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The *GIRM* provides a general description of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and its celebration:

> At the Last Supper Christ instituted the Paschal Sacrifice and banquet by which the Sacrifice of the Cross is continuously made present in the Church whenever the priest, representing Christ the Lord, carries out what the Lord himself did and handed over to his disciples to be done in his memory.
>
> For Christ took the bread and the chalice and gave thanks; he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, and drink: this is my Body; this is the cup of my Blood. Do this in memory of me." Accordingly, the Church has arranged the entire celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in parts corresponding to precisely these words and actions of Christ:

1. At the *Preparation of the Gifts*, the bread and the wine with water are brought to the altar, the same elements that Christ took into his hands.

2. In the *Eucharistic Prayer*, thanks is given to God for the whole work of salvation, and the offerings become the Body and Blood of Christ.

3. Through the fraction and through *Communion*, the faithful, though they are many, receive from the one bread of the Lord's Body and from the one chalice the Lord's Blood in the same way the Apostles received them from Christ's own hands.[103]

The Presentation of the Gifts as friends preparing a meal together. The Liturgy of the Eucharist, as a re-enactment of the Christ's Last Supper, is a sacramental sacrifice—a sacrifice in the form of a meal. By participating in the rite of the presentation of the gifts, we give ourselves to God in preparing this sacrificial meal by presenting to God our gifts of bread and wine.

The material gifts of food and drink in the bread and wine are already rich Biblical symbols of God's goodness to God's people throughout history,[104] and when we present them to God as the "fruit

[103] *GIRM* 72.

[104] Cf. *CCC* 1333–1335. While the full significance of the bread and wine is found in Jesus's offering them at the Last Supper, their symbolic significance includes God's goodness to God's People throughout salvation history. The bread and wine, "fruit of the earth and work of human hands," symbolize the gifts of God the Creator as well as the gifts offered to God by Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18). In the Old Testament, the bread symbolizes the manna by which God fed God's People in the wilderness, the daily bread as fruit of the promised land, and the pledge of God's faithfulness to God's promises. In the New Testament, the bread symbolizes the loaves Jesus multiplies to feed the multitude, bread which in turn prefigures the bread Jesus offers at the Last Supper. The wine in the Old Testament was offered in the "cup of blessing" at the end of the Passover meal in the messianic expectation of the rebuilding of Jerusalem; in the New Testament, the sign of water turned into wine at Cana announced the hour of Jesus's glorification.

of the earth and vine and work of human hands," we acknowledge that these gifts are *already* God's gifts to us. Nevertheless, by our presenting these gifts *freely* to God in *obedience* to Jesus's command to celebrate the Eucharist in his memory, these gifts become the tangible expression of our desire to give ourselves to God in gratitude and obedience. In our presentation of the gifts of bread and wine, we acknowledge that we have *received* all from God—especially redemption in Jesus Christ—and that we want to *give* all that we have received (including our very selves) back to God out of gratitude to God for Christ and in obedience to Christ. The gifts themselves are the symbolic expression of ourselves and of our desire to give ourselves to God in the celebration of the Eucharist.[105]

Pope John Paul II, in his document on the Eucharist *Dominicae Cenae*, explains the significance of this act of presenting these gifts:

> Although all those who participate in the Eucharist do not confect the sacrifice as [the priest] does, they offer with him, by virtue of the common priesthood, their own spiritual sacrifices represented by the bread and wine from the moment of their presentation at the altar. For this liturgical action, which takes a solemn form in almost all liturgies, has a "spiritual value and meaning." The bread and wine become in a

[105] The liturgical action of the presentation of the gifts has been understood in a variety of ways in Church tradition. Recent understanding since Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei* and the Second Vatican Council as expressed in the *GIRM* has changed the Rite from being called "The Offertory"—which emphasizes the action of the presentation of the gifts as a sacrifice in itself—to "The *Presentation* of the Gifts" to safeguard the centrality of the Eucharistic Prayer as *the* sacrificial action of Christ and His Body the Church; cf. "The Offertory in Tradition" in M. McGuckian, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* (UK: Gracewing, 2005), 56–77. While the "presentation" of the gifts may not detract from the centrality of the Eucharistic Prayer as our self-gift to God in Jesus Christ's sacrificial self-gift, it is still possible to understand the presentation of the gifts as our *action*—and, indeed, our *service* to God which contributes to a fuller expression of our gift of self to God in response to receiving God's gift of self in the Liturgy of the Word.

> sense a symbol of all that the Eucharistic assembly brings, on its own part, as an offering to God to be offered spiritually.[106]

According to a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends, the liturgical action of the presentation of the gifts can be seen as an activity friends share in preparing a meal together. Sharing a meal is a powerful example of conversation between good friends because it is a sharing of the material essentials of physical life in the context of the verbal communication of their spirit. By giving (offering) and receiving both bodily and spiritual nourishment with one another, conversation as a shared meal between friends contains a natural human sacrificial and sacramental quality.

In the liturgical action of the presentation of the gifts, we are inspired by God's Spirit to prepare the table of the altar by placing the bread and wine as symbols of ourselves and our desire to give ourselves to God in the celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer. We are thereby cooperating with God as with a good friend in preparing the sacrificial meal in honor of Jesus Christ.

The Eucharistic Prayer as conversation between God and us as between good friends. It is the faith of the Church that the Eucharistic Prayer is the center and summit of the entire Eucharistic action.[107] The Eucharistic Prayer is *Christ's prayer to the Father* as Head of His Body the Church in which we join Him in the Holy Spirit. As a sacramental sacrifice, the Eucharistic Prayer includes *thanksgiving* for all that the Father has done for us in Christ, the *commemoration*, in offering the Father our gifts of bread and wine, of Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice on the Cross for our redemption, and, finally, our *sanctification* in which those gifts are transformed by the Father's Spirit into Jesus Christ Himself

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[106] John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenae* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1980), 9.

[107] Cf. *GIRM* 78.

for our sacramental communion with Him and our unity with each other in Him.[108]

These three dimensions of the Eucharistic Prayer as Christ's prayer to the Father can be understood as Christ's gift of himself to the Father in *thanksgiving*, in *memorial*, and in working our *sanctification*. Looking at the Eucharistic Prayer according to a mystagogy of conversation between God and us as between good friends, it can be understood as a conversation between the Father and Jesus which we the Church, the Body of Christ, participate in through Christ our Head. In this conversation between the Father and Jesus, the three aspects of the Eucharistic Prayer as thanksgiving, memorial, and sanctification can be understood as a shared activity between the Father and Jesus that includes an exchange of material gifts and personal services in the context of verbal expression in prayer.

Before we proceed, however, we must recognize the foundational reality of the Eucharistic Prayer as Christ's sacrifice (self-gift) to the Father and our sacramental participation (self-gift) in this sacrifice.

The essence of religious sacrifice is the irrevocable *giving* of something of personal value to God.[109] Understood phenomenologically and psychologically, an essential part of sacrifice is the gesture of giving away, surrendering, or offering up such that sacrifice is an act by which the one who sacrifices reaches out beyond themselves even while their act is rooted in their interior disposition as a human being.[110] In a sacrifice to God, as one gives something of value to God, one gives oneself as well.

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[108] Cf. *GIRM* 78, *CCC* 1356–1373.

[109] Cf. J. Wohlmuth, "Interpretazioni teologiche del sacrificio," in E. Mazza, ed., *L'idea di sacrificio: Un approccio di teologia liturgica* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2002), 23–35.

[110] Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and the Mystery of the Eucharist*, 243–244; cf. 245–257.

Jesus's sacrifice on the Cross is the unique divine/human act of giving away, surrendering, and offering oneself to the Father in love ("Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" [Lk. 23:46]) and obedience ("Your will be done!" [Mt. 26:42]), the sole, real, and self-sufficient sacrifice that works our eternal redemption. However, in commanding the apostles to "do this in memory of me" (Lk. 22:19) at the Last Supper, Jesus invited them (and us) to celebrate his sacrifice on the Cross by a paschal meal. In celebrating this paschal meal, we can join Christ in giving ourselves *sacramentally* (through visible signs and rituals) with him to the Father.

The Council Fathers at Trent taught that this sacramental participation of ours in Christ's unique sacrifice on the Cross through the Eucharist is a *real*, though *relative*, sacrifice. It is *real* because we as Christ's Body the Church and by God's Spirit *give* ourselves with Jesus our Head to the Father in obediently celebrating the memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Yet this is a *relative* sacrifice because our sacramental celebration is not an autonomous activity; rather, it is one that is completely dependent upon Christ's unique sacrifice.[111]

Jesus's institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper in the form of a *paschal* meal makes its celebration in the Eucharistic Prayer a sacrifice that takes the form of a meal. The Eucharistic Prayer is decidedly a *sacrificial* meal, as Pope Pius XII clearly maintains in *Mediator Dei*:

> One would be straying from the truth if one were shrewdly to assert that what is involved here is a sacrifice and at the same time a meal on the part of a fraternal community, and that the climax, so to speak, of the whole sacrificial celebration is the communion received as a community. [112]

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[111] As the Council of Trent teaches,

> for it is one and the same sacrifice, the same sacrificing priest who now makes the offering through the ministry of the earthly priest and who once offered himself on the Cross. It is only the manner of the offering that is different. (DS 940–1743)

[112] *MD* 562–563, DS 3854.

While Christ gave himself to the Father in his once-and-for-all sacrifice on the Cross for our redemption, we as Christ's Body the Church, united with Christ our Head, join him sacramentally in his gift of himself to the Father by our celebration of his unique sacrifice in the Eucharistic Prayer. In this sacramental participation in Christ's sacrifice, the presiding priest as ordained minister represents Christ our Head united with us who form his Body.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the Church's sacramental participation in Christ's sacrifice to the Father because it is Christ's prayer to the Father as the Head of the Church His Body. The Eucharistic Prayer as Christ's prayer to the Father is comprised of Christ *thanking* the Father for all the Father has done in him, his *offering* to the Father of the *gifts* of bread and wine in memory of his unique sacrifice on the Cross, and his *sanctifying* us by presenting the gifts of bread and wine to the Father so that these gifts may be transformed by the Spirit into his Body and Blood for our sacramental communion with him.

In a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends, the Eucharistic Prayer as Christ's prayer to the Father in thanksgiving, offering of gifts, and sanctifying us can be understood as a *conversation* with his Father which he invites us to join in union with him. It is the Father who initiates this conversation by first sending His Son into the world to suffer, die, and rise for us, and by inspiring Jesus's institution of the Eucharist as the memorial of our salvation. Jesus as Head of His Body the Church responds to the Father's invitation by praying the Eucharistic Prayer in and through the celebrating priest and people. And the Father responds to Christ by accepting Christ's prayer of thanksgiving and the gifts of bread and wine offered in his name and transforming those gifts into Christ himself for the Church's sacramental communion with him. Therefore, as we, Christ's Body the Church, are united with Christ our Head in Jesus's conversation with the Father, the Eucharistic Prayer can be understood to be a conversation between God the Father and us in Jesus as between good friends. In this conversation, there is verbal communication of our selves and our love for each other in praise and thanksgiving, an exchange of gifts in the form of bread and wine,

and an exchange of personal services in those gifts being offered and, upon being transformed for our benefit, accepted.

Let us take up in order these three aspects of the Eucharistic Prayer as a conversation between the Father and us in Jesus in thanksgiving, the offering of gifts, and exchange of personal services.

First, consider the Eucharistic Prayer, as a conversation between the Father and us in Jesus, to be a verbal communication of our love for each other. The Eucharistic Prayer is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father for what the Father has done for us in Jesus Christ. Inspired by the Spirit of the Father to respond to His love for all of us in Christ, we respond by thanking the Father for creating, redeeming, and sanctifying us in Jesus.

In the liturgical celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest, who represents Christ the Head, first greets the people, Christ's Body, with the exclamation "The Lord be with you!", to which the faithful respond by greeting the priest in the same way. This opening dialogue reminds both the ordained priest and the people as baptized priests that the Lord is with them and desires to pray through them to the Father. The priest then directs the faithful to lift their hearts up to God, to which the people respond in the affirmative. This leads the priest to urge the people to join him in giving thanks to the Lord our God (our Father).

In this opening exchange between the ordained priest and the priestly people in Christ, the Father inspires both priest and people to cooperate in preparing themselves to address Him together *in* Jesus. Once priest and people are so prepared, it is the ordained priest as representative of Christ, the Head of His Body the Church, who calls on the name of God as *only Jesus can*: "Father!" Yet while it is the ordained priest alone, as representative of Christ the Head, who voices the Eucharistic Prayer, the people as Christ's Body and priests by baptism unite themselves to the ordained priest so that the whole people of God might join Christ in His prayer to the Father.[113]

[113] Cf. *MD* 517: "Now it is clear that the faithful offer the sacrifice by the hands of the priest from the fact that the minister at the altar, in offering a sacrifice in the

By calling on the Father as only Jesus can, priest and people, hierarchically united in Christ, begin a conversation with God the Father in Jesus. Initiated by the Father Himself in inspiring us to pray to Him, our conversation begins with our response in thanking the Father for all that He has done for us in Christ (*Preface*) and acclaiming Him in praise (*Sanctus*). Following this, we call upon the Father to send His Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine we are to offer Him so that He might transform them by His Spirit into Christ himself (*Epiclesis*). The words of Jesus at the Last Supper are then recited over the bread and wine (*Institution Narrative* and *Consecration*), and we recall before the Father all that Jesus has done for us, especially his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension (*Anamnesis*), and offer Him this memorial of Jesus for the Church (*Offering*) and all her members, the living and the dead, and the salvation of all (*Intercessions*). The Eucharistic Prayer is then concluded by our offering everything to the Father through Jesus and in the Spirit, which is affirmed by the people's resounding "Amen!", that is, "So be it!" (*Final Doxology*).

Conversation as a verbal communication between good friends is a mutual giving and receiving of each other in love in their sharing of thoughts and feelings about what they both love with each other. In the Eucharistic Prayer as conversation, there is a verbal communication between God the Father and us in Jesus by which we mutually give and receive each other in love in sharing, by means of prayer, our thoughts and feeling about the one whom we both love—Jesus Christ. The Father gives Himself to us in speaking His Word Jesus Christ to us in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, and inspires us to respond by giving ourselves to Him in our speaking of Jesus to Him, thanking Him for all that He has done for us in Jesus.

As mentioned above, Aristotle helped us to see, in the case of the benefactor, that it is in the activity of giving rather than receiving

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name of all His members, represents Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body. Hence the whole Church can rightly be said to offer up the victim through Christ … the people unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving with prayers or intention of the priest, even of the High Priest Himself.…"

that we human beings actualize ourselves and experience being most alive.[114] In conversation between friends, it is in the activity of sharing—especially of giving themselves to each other in communicating their thoughts and feelings about what they both love—that the friends actualize their friendship and are thus most alive as friends. This sharing begins with the friends calling each other by name, and it is in sharing with one another what they most love that the friends feel the exhilaration of being most alive in their love for each other. Moreover, as Christian thinkers like St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas would add, this self-actualization in giving is a self-*transcendence* in the giving friend's concern for the *other* friend in loving that friend in her or his love for God.

By joining in conversation with the Father in Jesus in the Eucharistic Prayer, we experience the exhilaration of calling God "Father" (through the priest voicing the Name and the people uniting themselves with him) and of giving ourselves to Him in union with Jesus throughout the prayer. This is not simply because we are actualizing *ourselves* naturally as human beings and supernaturally as God's adopted daughters and sons (by actualizing the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love) in giving ourselves (participating) in the prayer; it is also because we *transcend* ourselves in our concern for the glory of the Father, in praising and thanking the Father for His goodness in Jesus.[115] By calling on God's name as only Jesus can—"Father"—and pouring out our hearts to God for all that God has done for us in Jesus, we experience the Father as the transcendent center of reality and of our consciousness and so experience a graced self-transcendence in the love of God. Our divine friend has thus become the center of our lives.

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[114] Cf. *NE* IX.6 1167b15–1168a27 footnote 40.

[115] This transcendence in concern for God's glory is what St. Ignatius of Loyola calls a pure or right intention. For the central importance of such an intention is that all that is done for God's glory is based on an appreciation of the Divine Goodness; cf. J. Padberg, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (Saint Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 288.

As we continue to examine the Eucharistic Prayer according to a mystagogy of conversation between God and us as between good friends, we might also see it as the source of personal knowledge that God and us share with each other as good friends.

Aristotle also helped us see that the virtue goodness of good friends enables them to trust each other when sharing in conversation what most concerns them. Aelred maintained that true intimacy among good friends must have as its basis a love for Christ, and John Macmurray argued that the fruit of intimate conversation between good friends is a personal knowledge the friends have of each other. By analogy, we enjoy, in the Eucharistic Prayer as conversation between God the Father and us in Jesus, a trust and intimacy with the Father and a shared personal knowledge analogous to the knowledge that the Father and Jesus share (cf. Mt. 11:25–26). The Father in speaking His Word to us reveals His Son to us; Jesus, in turn, reveals the Father to us when we join ourselves with him in praising and thanking the Father for all that He has done for us in Jesus. As the Father and Jesus have personal knowledge of each other, so do we, united with Jesus in conversation with the Father, participate in their shared trust, intimacy, and personal knowledge of each other in the Eucharistic Prayer.

As on the Cross, where Christ offered himself to the Father in the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), so in the Eucharistic Prayer does Christ, as Head of His Body the Church, offer himself to the Father in the Spirit as he forever makes intercession on our behalf (cf. Heb. 7:25). By our celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer, we enter this dynamic trinitarian relationship and so come to know (*gnosis*) the divine persons.

In the dynamic of the Eucharistic Prayer, our experience of the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is in our calling on the Father's name, in praising and thanking Him for all that He has done for us in Jesus. The Father whom we address by name as the source and ultimate end of our prayer transcends our immediate experience. For unlike Jesus the Word made flesh, who can be physically apprehended by the apostles, remembered by them in their preaching and writing, and imagined by us in listening to the Father speak His Word to us, the Father as principle of the Trinity and of all created reality transcends all sense experience,

all human imagination.[116] We have personal knowledge of the Father only by the Spirit in Jesus as we listen to the Father speak His Word to us in obedient faith, and when we respond through the Spirit by giving Jesus back to Him in the Eucharistic Prayer. Through Jesus and in the Spirit, we know the Father in the Eucharistic celebration as the personal source of both Jesus and the Spirit and thus of all reality. In addressing God as "Father" and praying to God in Jesus and the Spirit, we know the Father as both the transcendent personal source of all love and mercy and ultimate personal goal of our lives.

In the Liturgy of the Word, we *receive* Jesus from the Father and the Spirit enables us to come to know Jesus personally. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we come to know Jesus personally as well but in a more profound way, for as the Spirit inspires us in *giving* him to the Father by thanking the Father for him, we plumb more deeply the depths of the mystery of Christ in our verbal articulation of all that the Father has done for us in Christ. Moreover, we give ourselves as well in so giving Jesus to the Father, and in this giving are more profoundly open (*kenosis*) to receiving the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. In praying the Eucharistic Prayer in union with Jesus, we experience him as *Emmanuel*, God with us, the divine/human friend *in whom* we carry on a conversation with the Father as the divine friend we address.

In the same way, we have a personal knowledge of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgy of the Word as we listen in obedient faith to the Father speak His Word to us and meditate, like Mary, on that Word in our hearts (cf. Lk. 1:29; 2:19, 51). Yet we come to an even more profound personal knowledge of the Spirit in our celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer, for in being inspired by the Spirit to give Jesus and ourselves with Jesus to the Father, we are in more intimate contact with the Spirit as the personal loving impulse in that giving. The Spirit is the

[116] St. Ignatius of Antioch calls the Father "the silence" from which His Word proceeds and the source of the secrets of the faith; cf. *Letter to the Magnesians* 8.2, 93 and *Letter to the Ephesians* 19.1, 96, both in C. Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

inner source of that love which moves us to give ourselves with Jesus to the Father.

Finally, in the Doxology we have personal knowledge of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit taking us up into their Triune Life by leading us to offer ourselves as Church and the whole of reality *to* the Father *through*, *with*, and *in* the Son *united* in the Holy Spirit. As all creation proceeds from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, we participate, in the Eucharistic Prayer as concluding with the great Doxology, in the return of all creation to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, experiencing as far as is possible in this life God as all and in all.

This personal knowledge of the Triune God in our celebration of the Eucharist is the fruit of a conversation between God and us as between good friends. And as John Macmurray would remind us, since the personal knowledge in direct communication between good friends cannot be adequately appreciated outside such communication, so our personal knowledge of the Triune God in our celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer cannot be experienced outside this conversation with God in living faith.

The second dimension of the mystery of the Eucharistic Prayer as a conversation between the Father and us in Jesus is the Eucharistic Prayer as *memorial*.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the making present and sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body.[117] The memorial of Christ's unique sacrifice involves the offering of the gifts of bread and wine to the Father and the recitation of Christ's words of Institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My blood" (Lk. 22:19–20).

Whereas our mystagogy of the Eucharistic Prayer as *thanksgiving* appealed to our experience and understanding of conversation between good friends in their *verbal communication* with each other, in

[117] *CCC* 1362.

the Eucharistic Prayer as *memorial* our mystagogy appeals especially to conversation in the communication between good friends in their *exchange of material gifts*.

When good friends give good things to each other in the form of material gifts, those gifts materially represent the friends themselves and their love for each other. Such an exchange is an important aspect of their communication of themselves and their love for each other, and while it is often accompanied by their verbal communication of love for each other, the exchange itself of those gifts expresses that love concretely as a kind of natural human sacrament.

At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and wine, offered these to the Father in prayer, and gave these to his disciples to eat and drink, telling them that these were now his body and blood, the commemoration of his imminent sacrifice on the Cross. In the Eucharistic Prayer, the ordained priest and priestly people celebrate this memorial in obedience to Christ's command by imitating Christ in taking the bread and wine and reciting Jesus's words of institution in the context of praying to the Father in memory of him. The Eucharistic Prayer as this memorial of Jesus is the sacramental expression of Christ's loving obedience to the Father in his sacrifice on the Cross and the Father's acceptance of that sacrifice in Christ's resurrection. Thus, according to a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us, the Eucharistic Prayer as memorial is an exchange of gifts between God and us as between good friends. In this exchange of bread and wine in memory of Christ and in obedience to his command, we offer to God the Father *the* gift the Father has first given us—Jesus—and the Father responds by giving us Jesus Christ in those gifts transformed by His Spirit. This exchange of gifts between good friends is a sacramental communication of their love for each other, a communication within the context of the Eucharistic Prayer as a verbal communication of their love.

Yet, in this exchange of gifts between God and us, we are also performing a service for one another. In obediently enacting the memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross before the Father, we perform a service in loving obedience to God as we ask the Father to send His Spirit upon these gifts and upon us as we offer them

and ourselves to Him. The Father responds to this obedient service by sanctifying the gifts and we who offer those gifts by the Holy Spirit. This aspect of the mystery of the Eucharist is the work of our *sanctification* which, from the perspective of a Eucharistic mystagogy of conversation between good friends, can be seen as a mutual communication between friends in an exchange of personal services.

Friends give themselves to each other in communication not only verbally and in an exchange of material gifts but also in an exchange of personal services. In this exchange, the friends help each other by *doing* things for each other, sharing with each other their own particular talents in their own inimitable ways, thereby communicating their love for each other in mutual service. In an analogical way in the Eucharistic Prayer, the Father and us in Jesus mutually serve each other as we perform the service Christ has commanded of us with loving obedience and the Father responds by sanctifying the gifts and we who offer them by His Spirit.[118]

The Eucharistic Prayer, then, as the summit of the Eucharistic celebration and of the Church's worship, can be understood as a conversation between God and us as between good friends. In this conversation, the friends give themselves to each other in love by communicating verbally and by exchanging gifts and personal services with each other. The very heart of this conversation is the love the friends have for each other in their *giving* themselves to each other. This love as self-giving is the point of analogy with the Eucharistic Prayer as *sacrifice*. Yet in giving themselves to each other, friends *receive* themselves from each other; this *reception* is the point of analogy with the Eucharistic Prayer as *sacrament*.

The Eucharistic Prayer is a sacrifice the fruit of which is the sacrament of Christ himself. The Eucharist as the *sacrament* of Christ's

[118] In the meditation "Contemplation to Attain Divine Love" in his *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius asks the retreatant to consider the divine action in creation as "God laboring for [them]" (*SpEx* 236). The Father's transformation by the Spirit of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood is an extraordinary instance of such divine labor, or service, on behalf of humankind.

presence in his humanity and divinity in the consecrated gifts is the result of the Eucharist as *sacrifice*, for by doing in loving obedience what Jesus commanded us to do, we *give* the gifts of bread and wine and ourselves to God and God *gives* us Christ in return. By God's grace, we receive in giving so that the Eucharist as sacrament follows from the Eucharist as sacrifice as receiving follows from giving. As Jesus receives eternal life in the resurrection from the Father in giving himself completely in sacrifice to the Father for our sakes, so we receive Jesus himself in giving the gifts of bread and wine and ourselves to the Father in memory of him and in obedience to his command—in giving, we receive. Good friends experience this in their communication with each other. They experience each other as present to each other, which is a result of their actively giving themselves to each other in conversation.

Communion between God and us in conversation as between good friends. The Liturgy of the Eucharist concludes with the Communion Rite. This rite includes the celebration of the Lord's Prayer, the exchange of peace, the fraction, and sacramental communion.[119] In our mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends, we shall focus on sacramental communion as the culmination of this conversation.

As we have noted, the Eucharist is a paschal meal, or a sacrifice in the form of a meal. The fruit of the Eucharist as sacrifice is the sacramental presence of Jesus Christ in the sanctified gifts, the living Christ with his flesh and blood, body and soul, humanity and divinity.[120] The meal aspect of the Eucharist is our sacramental communion with the Lord understood as our participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

As a complement to sacrifice as an active *giving* of ourselves to God in *offering* God gifts of bread and wine in Jesus's name, "sacrament" is a *receptive* action, taking and receiving God's sanctifying gift in faith,

[119] *GIRM* 80–89.

[120] DS 874, 883; cf. DS 163ff, 1651.

hope, and love. The Eucharist is both *sacrifice* and *sacrament—giving* and *receiving*.[121]

The Eucharist as a sacramental meal, however, is not a mere passive reception of God's sanctifying gift to us; rather, it requires of us an active participation—a *giving* of ourselves in faith, hope, and love in its reception, just as God's sanctifying gift of God's Word in the Liturgy of the Word requires of us an active listening in faith, hope, and love.

Active reception of the Lord in sacramental communion requires that we first prepare ourselves actively to receive him, and we do this by praying to his Father and ours to make ourselves worthy. This preparation begins with the communal praying of the Lord's Prayer.

In praying the Lord's Prayer, we call on *our* Father and, after petitioning Him that His name be hallowed, His Kingdom come, and His will be done, we ask Him to "give us this day our daily bread," which in the context of the Eucharist is our petition that He give us Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic bread, and to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," which is our appeal to our Father to purify us of sin so that we might receive Jesus Christ worthily in communion. The priest's prayer of the embolism, the peoples' response in doxology, and the celebration of the rites of peace and fraction (which include chanting the *Agnus Dei*) underline this prayer of ours to the Father that we might worthily celebrate our sacramental communion with His Son Jesus Christ.[122]

In our celebrating the Eucharist as a sacramental meal, we receive Christ himself physically as well as spiritually—body, blood, soul, and divinity. Christ is, for the duration of the existence of the sanctified bread and wine, present with and within us, and continues to be present to us by grace. Moreover, as our reception of the sacrament unites us not only with Christ but also with the Father and the Spirit through

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[121] Cf. Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and the Mystery of the Eucharist*, 244.

[122] Cf. *GIRM* 81–83.

him, our reception of the sacrament is a communion with the holy and Triune God (Jn. 14:10, 23), an experience of "eternal life" (Jn. 6:58).

The Church teaches us that by our celebration of the Eucharist and partaking in the sacramental meal, we augment our union with Jesus Christ, the Father, and the Spirit, distance ourselves from sin, strengthen ourselves in charity, unite ourselves more deeply to Christ's Mystical Body the Church, commit ourselves to serving the poor, and work for the reunion of all Christians. We are also prepared to celebrate the Eschatological Banquet in Heaven where God will be all and in all.[123]

Thus, while our celebration of the Eucharist as a sacramental meal in communion with God is a mystery which transcends human comprehension and anything we can experience in human friendship—even in the most intimate of conversations with good friends—a mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends can nevertheless help us in some way to appreciate this mystery of sacramental communion so that we might give ourselves in actively participating in it.

For Aristotle, good friends want most to be and, if possible, *live* with each other so they may continually share themselves with each other in conversation.[124] For Aquinas, as we have noted, the first effect of the mutual love of good friends is their union (*unio*) in knowledge and love of each other,[125] which he describes as a mutual indwelling.[126] The friends dwell within each other as they hold each other in their knowledge and affections. And should this indwelling in knowledge and love be a mutual love (*caritas*) for each other as other selves in

[123] *CCC* 1391–1405.

[124] *NE* IX.9, 1170b6–12, 1171a1–2, IX.12, 1171a30–33.

[125] *ST* I-II, q. 28, 1.

[126] *ST* I-II, q. 28, 2.

God,[127] they experience spiritual joy in each other.[128] In other words, the friends experience communion with one another.

Good friends experience this communion as the fruit of their continued and ever more personally revealing conversation with each other. Sometimes this communion can be a simple resting in each other's presence, where no words are spoken because there is no longer any need for verbal communication. The conversation is now communication in mutual awareness of each other in their presence with one another. In this communion of wordless conversation, simply being attentive to one another expresses everything to the other.

This experience and understanding of good friends, especially Aquinas's understanding of mutual indwelling among good friends who love each other in their love for God, can help us appreciate in some way the supernatural indwelling of the Triune God in the souls of communicants in their faith, hope, and love. As friends dwell in each other in their knowledge of and love for each other, so do the Father, Son, and Spirit, by analogy, indwell in us in faith, hope, and love, an indwelling that is a mutual loving awareness in communion accompanied by the hope of a direct face-to-face encounter in love when faith gives way to sight and hope gives way to possession (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12–13).

However, this sacramental communion with the living indwelling God cannot be a static mutual co-existence akin to that of a married couple who have begun to take each other for granted in their day-to-day life together; rather, it must be a dynamic inter-communion between good friends in continuing conversation.

Aristotle describes the characteristic desire of good friends to converse with one another:

> If the virtuous man feels towards his friend in the same way as he feels towards himself (for his friend is a second self)—then, just as a

[127] Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 23, 1.

[128] Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 28, 1.

> man's own existence is desirable for him, so, or nearly so, is his friend's existence also desirable. But, as we say, it is the consciousness of oneself as good that makes existence desirable, and such consciousness is desirable in itself. Therefore a man ought also to share his friend's consciousness of his existence, and this is attained by the friends living together and by conversing and communicating their thoughts to each other, for this is the meaning of living together as applied to human beings; it does not mean merely feeding in the same place, as it does when applied to cattle.[129]

As living with each other is for friends to give themselves to each other in conversation and communication, which can include a wordless awareness of each other's presence, our communion with the indwelling God can be understood as analogous to a conversation between good friends. And, appealing to Aristotle yet again, since a friendship of the good is good and grows with the friends' continual intercourse as they actualize their friendship,[130] so by analogy must our relationship with God as that of good friends grow as we continue our conversation with God in the intimacy of sacramental communion. In this way, we will grow in intimacy with God our friend by sharing all that we have and are with each other (Aelred), thereby deepening our mutual indwelling (Aquinas) and the depth of our personal knowledge of each other (Macmurray).

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[129] *NE* IX.9, 1170b6–13.

[130] *NE* IX.12, 1172a10–11.

4

The Concluding Rites to the Eucharist: Taking Leave to Serve and Looking Forward to Reunion

According to the *GIRM*, the concluding rites to the Eucharist include the priest's greeting and blessing that the faithful may be sent forth to serve others in praising and blessing God.[131] This "missioning" of the faithful to go forth from the Eucharistic celebration is an important effect and even continuation of the sacrament.

The Second Vatican Council Fathers in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* remind us that the Eucharistic celebration does not exhaust Christian life:

> The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Before [women and men] can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion: "How then are they to call upon [the Lord] in whom they have not yet believed? But how are they to believe [the Lord] whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear if no one preaches? And how are [women and men] to preach unless they be sent?"[132]

If the Eucharist as our giving of ourselves to the Father in offering Jesus's sacrifice to Him is the center and summit of the Christian life, it

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[131] *GIRM* 90.

[132] *SC* 9, DS 4009.

is also the sacramental source and inspiration for making the whole of our lives and way of thinking a self-offering in sacrifice to the Father in Jesus Christ, as St. Paul urges us to do in his letter to the Romans:

> And now, [sisters and brothers], I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing, and perfect. (Rom. 12:1–2)

Even martyrdom itself as the supreme act of witness was understood, beginning from the early Church, as a Eucharistic action—an offering of self in union with the sacrifice of Christ to the Father.[133]

In receiving the priest's final blessing as *missio*, we receive God's missioning to go forth from the Eucharistic celebration and *continue* giving ourselves to the Father in Jesus Christ by the Spirit in praise of God and service to our neighbor as we go about our daily lives in the world.

The significance of this final blessing as God's missioning for us to go forth and continue living the Eucharist may be better understood (and so carried out!) by considering an analogy with our experience of conversation between good friends. The center and summit of the friends' relationship with each other is their mutual gift of self in conversation together. The fruit of this mutual self-gift, however, is not simply their continued communion with each other but also their desire

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[133] E.g., *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* in Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*. In St. Polycarp's prayer before his martyrdom, which is modelled on the Eucharistic Prayer, he prays:

> Father of thy beloved and blessed servant Jesus Christ, through whom we have received full knowledge of thee … I bless thee, because thou hast deemed me worthy of this day and hour, to take part in the number of martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, for the "resurrection to eternal life" of soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit; among whom I be received in thy presence this day as a rich and acceptable sacrifice.

Indeed, in his being burned alive, he is described as "bread baking" (14.1–15.1).

to be of service to others, for the friends also have responsibilities for others.

According to Aristotle's understanding of friendship within his overall practical philosophy (ethics and politics), complete friendship—that is, friendship among the virtuous—is not only the highest form of a happy and fulfilling human life lived in community but also the inspiration the friends have to serve the wider political community. In an analogous way, our conversation with the Father in Jesus in the Eucharist is the source of our going out into the world in service *together as friends*. Christ called his disciples his friends and promised to be with them in their going forth to preach and serve in his name (cf. Mt. 28:18–20).

In our friendship with God, moreover, we do not have to discontinue our conversation as friends when we are sent to go forth from the Eucharistic celebration. This is in contrast with human friends who will have to discontinue their conversation when departing from each other to serve their community, although they do so with the hope and intention of returning to and conversing with each other when they can.

Thanks to the divine indwelling, God is always intimately with us. We can always continue to speak with God as we go forth to serve in God's name. In going forth with God to serve God, our conversation together in the Eucharistic celebration continues to be the source of our inspiration and renewal in mission.

5

Conclusion

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called for a more active participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist. They described this active participation in these words:

> Christ's faithful … should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.[134]

In an effort to promote greater appreciation of and active participation in the Eucharistic celebration, I have considered the Eucharist according to a mystagogy of friendship and, specifically, a mystagogy of conversation between God and us as between good

[134] *SC* 48, DS 4048. Cf. *MD* 506: "All the faithful should be aware that to participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice is their chief duty and supreme dignity, and that not in an inert and negligent fashion, giving way to distractions and day-dreaming, but with such earnestness and concentration that they may be united as closely as possible with the High Priest, according to the Apostle, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' And together with Him and through Him let them make their oblation, and in union with Him let them offer up themselves."

friends. Basing this mystagogy on the Second Vatican Council's description of the God of revelation, who "speaks to [women and men] as friends so that [God] might invite them into fellowship with [God's self],"[135] and on Biblical accounts of friendship, especially that of Jesus inviting his disciples into a friendship with him, I have enlisted the help of representative thinkers on friendship from both the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions to grasp how a conversation between good friends can help us understand our relationship with God in the Eucharist and so make it easier for us to participate more actively in the Eucharistic celebration.

At the center of the Second Vatican Council Fathers' understanding of active participation in the Eucharist is our self-offering with Jesus to the Father. Analyzing conversation between good friends as a shared communication in which the friends *give* and *receive* themselves in love, I have argued that this give-and-take of self in their conversation is the analogue to the Eucharist as *sacrifice* (Jesus's self-giving to the Father which we are invited to join by offering ourselves) and *sacrament* (our reception of Jesus in the transformation of the gifts offered in his name), and that this dynamic interplay can be seen in the two parts of the Eucharistic celebration—the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharist—as the two great moments of a conversation between God and us as between good friends. In the Liturgy of the Word, God the Father gives Himself to us in inviting us into a conversation with Him by speaking Jesus His Word to us (whom we receive in obedient faith); in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we respond to God's self-gift in Jesus by giving ourselves to God in speaking (offering) Jesus to the Father (whom He receives in His love for Jesus and us in Jesus).

However, while I endeavored to show that the Liturgies of the Word and the Eucharist can be so understood as the two great moments of give-and-take in conversation between God and us as between good friends, it became clear in my analysis that both Liturgies need to be seen as manifesting a *mutual* give-and-take in conversation between friends, for we respond to the Father's gift of self in Christ in the

[135] *DV* 2, DS 4202.

Liturgy of the Word by giving ourselves to Him in our offering of the Creed and prayers to Him in Christ's name, and in the Liturgy of the Eucharist the Father responds to our self-gift in Jesus by giving Himself in the Spirit in transforming what we give Him so that we might receive Jesus in sacramental communion. Indeed, even our reception of Christ in sacramental communion involves a mutual give-and-take in conversation, for we need to give ourselves actively in living faith to this reception if we are truly to receive Christ. Finally, as God, through the ordained priest in the blessing, sends us forth to serve God in the world, there is conversation in so far as we respond obediently to God's missioning in faith and love, and with the hope of returning once again to the Eucharistic celebration as a renewal of our conversation with God.

Yet what is central to this essay as a mystagogy of the Eucharist is the love good friends have in their conversation with each other—a love that is a mutual giving of self to the other in sharing what is of most importance to both, a human analogue to active participation in the Eucharist as an offering of ourselves *with* Jesus in our giving *of* Jesus to the Father. If we find this mutual self-giving love between good friends attractive and worth the effort to put into practice in our own human friendships, how much more attractive ought it to be for us to put this love into practice in our relationship with God through our active participation in the Eucharist!

It is my hope that this mystagogy of the Eucharist as a conversation between God and us as between good friends can help us appreciate the significance of—and so actively participate in—the celebration of the Eucharist. Such is the hope, too, of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*—that all of us, by giving thanks to God in offering the Immaculate Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also with him, can offer ourselves through Christ the Mediator so that we may be drawn, day by day, into ever more perfect union with God and with each other so that God may, finally, be all in all.[136]

[136] Cf. *SC* 48, DS 4048.

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