

The Nourishing Character of The Eucharist

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The overwhelming number of believers flocking towards this august Sacrament is awe-inspiring. Masses are celebrated everywhere: in the streets and even in shopping malls. Yet, undeniably, dichotomy of faith and *praxis* exists and persists. Hence, what does “Eucharistic nourishment” signify?

The theology of the Eucharist, under which four Eucharistic themes, namely, Eucharist as sacrifice, thanksgiving, holy communion, and sacred banquet, provides us what we may consider as substantial understanding of what the Eucharist is all about. Among the Eucharistic themes, the Eucharist as sacred banquet is the closest to “nourishment.” Just as ordinary food nourishes the physical body, the Eucharist, in which Christ is both signified and contained, maintains, supports, promotes and fosters growth of man’s spiritual life depending on his personal disposition and devotion. Thus, Eucharistic nourishment effects intimate union with Christ, renewal in the life of grace, separation from sin, church formation and commitment to the least, the last and the lost. Thus, three areas of application – faith, good works and prayer – are mentioned as concrete avenues of growth of life of God in man in *praxis*.

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Eucharistic nourishment, therefore, signifies communion – a life that is shared in common, first and foremost, with God and neighbor especially the least, the last, and the lost. Both “informative” and “performative” aspects of faith are indispensable to authentic union, or life of communion with God and neighbor.

“The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.”¹ A “source” is that from which all other actions find origin. “Summit” means the peak towards which all other actions find completion. This is not difficult to demonstrate particularly in the Filipino context. Many, if not all of the celebrations that we have, begin or end with the celebration of the Eucharist. It is also evident that other sacraments are administered within the context of the celebration of the Eucharist.

Nowadays, the celebration of the Eucharist has gone beyond the walls of religious-related activities. It has influenced social and civic activities. In fact, it is viewed necessary to have the celebration of the Eucharist during political caucuses, rallies, meetings and the like. Social celebrations of all kinds – reunions, anniversaries, birthdays, achievements – are graced with the celebration of the Eucharist. It is only in the Philippines that we have Masses celebrated everywhere and thereby becomes of utmost interest to foreigners – even in shopping malls!

Or we can also reverse the view. The celebration of the Eucharist has been trivialized at times that it becomes a mere “social celebration” devoid of religious significance. Cantalamesa warns the faithful with these words: “The most serious risk we run is to grow accustomed to the Eucharist, to take it for granted and, therefore, to trivialize it.”² The Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC) observes that “the Mass or Eucharistic celebration has become perhaps the most familiar religious activity in Filipino society ...so familiar that at times it has become routine or taken for granted.”³

¹ *Catechism of Catholic Church (CCC)*, Definitive Edition (Manila, Word & Life Pub., 1997) 1324. See also *Lumen Gentium (LG)*, 11 in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, ed., New Rev. Ed., vol. 1 (Philippines: Paulines Pub. Hse, 1984). Henceforth, all Vatican II references will be taken from this source.

² Raniero Cantalamesa, “*This Is My Body*”: *Eucharistic Reflections Inspired by Adoro Te Devote and Ave Verum* (Pasay: Paulines Publishing House, 2006), 50.

³ *Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC)*, New Ed. (Manila: Word and Life Pub., 1997), 1669.

Lots of books have been written about the subject, "Eucharist." The teachings of the Fathers of the Church on the Eucharist are inestimable. St. Ignatius of Antioch, for example, speaks of the one flesh of the Lord and one chalice that bring union. He also mentions the medicinal aspect of the Eucharist: antidote against death.⁴ Likewise, St. Justin speaks of the presence of Christ in the bread and wine which nourishes us by way of assimilation.⁵ Moreover, St. Irenaeus regards the Eucharist as sacramental sacrifice of Christ.⁶

The teachings of the Magisterium regarding the Eucharist are inviolable: the Council of Ephesus (431) affirmed the life-giving, real flesh of the Lord in the Eucharist; the fourth Lateran Council used the term *transsubstantiat* (transubstantiated) referring to the change of substance of bread into the Body of Christ and the wine into His Blood;⁷ and with the Council of Trent,⁸ the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is further affirmed as truly, really and substantially contained under the appearance of bread and wine.⁹

Briefly, there are some aspects of the Eucharist which may have been dealt with in previous studies and which we may be familiar with. This refers to the history and development of the theology of the Eucharist,¹⁰ the rites of the celebration of the Eucharist and the theology of actions and

⁴ See Joseph Gawlu Yung Wa, *The Impact of Current Trends in Eucharistic Theology on Ecumenical Dialogue: An Evaluation* (SThD diss.: Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2007), 35. See also Ignatius of Antioch, "Philadelp," 4, in *Fathers of the Church*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), 114.

⁵ Ibid., 36. See also Justin Martyr, "Apology" I, 66,2, Thomas B. Falls, trans., in *Fathers of the Church*, vol. VI (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), 105-6.

⁶ Ibid. See also Irenaeus, "Adversus Haereses," IV, 17, 5, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 1: *Apostolic Fathers – Justin Martyr – Irenaeus*, Roberts et Donaldson, eds. (Michigan: WM. B. EERDMANS Publishing Company, 1985), 484; See also David N. Power, *Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing Tradition* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 116.

⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁸ See Council of Trent, session XIII, chapter 4, canon II.

⁹ Ibid., 42. See also Henry Densinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (DS), New Ed. (32nd Ed) (A. Schonmetzer, 1963) 1513.

¹⁰ See G.T.H. Liesting, *The Sacrament of the Eucharist*, James Boumans, trans. (New Jersey: Newman Press, 1968), 1-14. See also Aime Georges, Martimort, *The Signs of the New Covenant* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1963), 155-175.

gestures in the celebration of the Eucharist,¹¹ the real presence of Christ and transubstantiation.¹²

There is, however, a particular aspect of the Eucharist which needs further study from a dogmatic approach. It is the “nourishing character” of the Eucharist.¹³ This paper, therefore, is intended to explore the answer to the main inquiry: What does the nourishing character” of the Eucharist signify?

A better understanding of the dogma of the Eucharist will provide the faithful a significant basis toward a more profound appreciation of the importance of their faith, good works and prayer life.

The life of the church revolves around the Eucharist. In fact, the Eucharist makes the Church.¹⁴ There is therefore an imperative need to continuously strengthen the bond which binds the members of the Church to one another and this, through a more mature view of the Eucharist.

Indeed, the Church has, for its nourishment, the life giving bread of God. This life giving bread is the Eucharist. Since the Church is composed of all baptized persons, naturally, the Eucharist has a central role to play in the life of every baptized person. Certainly, baptism is the starting point from which the person participates in the life of the divine,¹⁵ but it is through the Eucharist that the divine life is constantly nourished.

Spiritual dryness is a lethal and deadly sickness. There is no better remedy against it than the Eucharist.

¹¹ See Adolph Dominic Frenay, *The Spirituality of the Mass: In the Light of Thomistic Theology* (USA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1963), 15-290.

¹² See William Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 113-121. See also Benedict Groeschel and James Monti, *In the Presence of Our Lord: The History, Theology, and Psychology of Eucharistic Devotion* (Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1997), 59-102.

¹³ There is a pastoral letter, “Living Eucharist: Gathered, Nourished, Sent” by Bishop Robert Lynch, Diocese of St. Peterburg, Florida, which is somewhat related to this aspect of the Eucharist (see <http://home.catholicweb.com/Eucharist/index.cfm/NewsItem?id=21519&From=News#>).

¹⁴ See Pope John Paul II's *Ecclesia de Eucharistia, Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church* (EdE), (Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2003) 1.

¹⁵ See CCC, 1265.

It has been a constant teaching of the Church that the Eucharist is “the summit and source of the Christian life.”¹⁶ In the study, we hope to demonstrate the importance of the Eucharist as sustenance and nourishment in his journey towards his ultimate calling, to participate in the divine life, and be more profoundly aware of the need to grow spiritually, and the essential role that the Eucharist plays in this process. Keeping these objectives in mind, this paper hopes to challenge the faithful into a more meaningful, more joyful and more fruitful reception of the Eucharist.

It is our firm and fundamental assumption in the development of this paper that Christ is really and substantially, but sacramentally present in the Eucharist; and, therefore, efficaciously effects grace for spiritual growth of the recipient in particular and of the church in general.

Understanding the Doctrine of Divinization

God wants human beings to participate in His own life: “As human beings we each have this one, unique calling to achieve *theosis*...to become a god, to be like God himself, to be united with him.”¹⁷ Quite a number of passages in the Scriptures testifies to this truth. From the Old Testament down to the New Testament, God is calling mankind for a fellowship with Him.

In His divine plan, God created man according to His own image and likeness that the latter might attain his ultimate end. The capacity to communicate with God is embedded in the nature of man. In fact, man alone has the “capacity for God” (*homo est Dei capax*).¹⁸ This communication with

¹⁶ CCC, 1324. See also LG, 11.

¹⁷ Christoforos Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” in *Eastern Orthodox Theology*, Daniel B. Clendemin, ed. (USA: Baker Books, 1995), 184. See also Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of Human Person* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 15, 30, 82; Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 12; Vladimir Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, trans. (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 90, quoting St. Maximus the Confessor, “Ad Joanem cubicularium,” Epist. 43, in PG, 91.640 BC; and J. Beganni, *Early Syriac Theology* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1983), 42.

¹⁸ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CSDC)*, Phil. Ed. (Philippines: World & Life Publications, 2005), 109. See also CCC, title of Chapter 1, Section

God must reach maturity and ultimately, union with God. Unfortunately, a tragic event happened along the way. The fall of man sets himself away from God.¹⁹ The image of God in man has been blurred so much so that left to himself, it is now impossible for man to reach his ultimate end. Out of great love, God intervenes and still “we are called to become divine, not only before our fall into sin, but afterwards as well.”²⁰

Here is the most touching love story of all season: “No power and no sin is able to overcome the love of God for humanity. In spite of human sin, God’s love for all mankind stands firm.”²¹ The transcendent God pitched his tent among us that all of us might be saved. St. Irenaeus powerfully sums up the mystery of incarnation: “God made Himself man, that we might become God.”²² The incarnation event – God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ – shows the immeasurable love of God for man. God’s love concretizes the inviolable value and dignity that are inherent to man: That he is created in the image and likeness of God; that he is redeemed by Christ and that he is destined to share eternal life with God.²³

The universal calling of God for man to participate in His life beginning at creation and renewed in the redemptive act of Christ on the cross redounds to the concept of divinization. Understanding the reality of this calling can be seen from these two perspectives: that God created man whose image and likeness is of Himself so that man might configure himself to the Creator; and that God redeemed him from the slavery of sin, the obstacle for man to attain his final calling.

1, Part 1; *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) and Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (EV) (Pasay: Paulines Publishing House, 1995), 34.

¹⁹ “The consequences of sin, insofar as it is an act of separation from God, are alienation, that is, the separation of man not only from God but also from himself, from other men and from the world around him” (CSDC, 116).

²⁰ Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” 185.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

²² Vladimir Lossky, *Image and Likeness of God*, 97, quoting Irenaeus, “Adversus haereses,” V, preface, in *PG*, 27.1120. See also Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 8; and Maximus the Confessor, “Theological and Economic Chapters,” in *PG*, 90.1165.

²³ See CSDC, 35, 36. The catechism gives five reasons why the Word became man: 1) The Word became man “for us men and our salvation” (CCC, 456); 2) “in order to save us by reconciling us with God” (*Ibid.*, 457); 3) “so that thus we might know God’s love” (*Ibid.*, 458); 4) “to be our model for holiness” (*Ibid.*, 459); 5) “to make us partakers of the divine nature” (*Ibid.*, 460).

Redemption²⁴ and divinization or deification are terms closely related to one another. The work of redemption which consists of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, opens up the possibility for man to attain his final destiny. It must be noted that the necessity of the descent of God in the person of Christ makes man capable of ascent in the Spirit. Thus, the incarnation event paves the way to the ultimate calling of human persons: union with God, *theosis*.

This union of man and divine is first accomplished in the incarnation event of the Son of God – Jesus Christ, God made man. Christ assumed the nature of man fully and completely yet, He is also completely and fully divine. Christ is really human and divine in nature for “if this union has been accomplished in the divine person of the son, who is God become man, it is necessary that each human person, in turn should become god by grace, or a ‘partaker of the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4).”²⁵ Man is called to partake of the divine nature, *i.e.*, to participate in Christ’s divinity.

Theosis or Process of Divinization

Basic Notion

The term *theosis* (deification) and divinization can be used interchangeably. *Theosis* means “the elevation of the human being to the divine sphere, to the atmosphere of God...the union of human with the divine.”²⁶

Moreover, divinization is defined, according to Bilaniuk, as:

the omnipotent and sanctifying, divine and Triadic activity which, because of the indwelling of the Trinity and grace and

²⁴ For Gregory, redemption is not “a satisfaction granted to divine justice, but a reconciliation of human nature, fallen and mortal with a living God. By accepting that his own Son, in the flesh of the old Adam, dies on the cross, and by communicating his own life to man in Jesus, God re-established his own legitimate power and suppressed the deadly usurpation of the Devil...” (John Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas* [New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary press, 1998], 159). See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 39.

²⁵ See Lossky, *Image and Likeness of God*, 98. See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 237, 111-12, 205.

²⁶ Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” 184. See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 40, 121; and Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 35.

because of the inborn and natural capacity of the creature for transfiguration, induces a process of assimilation to God the Father of the whole human person, of mankind and of the visible and invisible universe in its totality, through the mediation of the incarnate Logos, Christ... and in the Holy Spirit.²⁷

The work of divinization is, first of all, initiated by God: "An act of the all powerful God that springs freely from His transcendence while remaining essentially unknowable."²⁸ First, divinization happens in the indwelling of the Trinity and grace as cited above. The Trinitarian dimension is, thus, best illustrated this way: "God the Father, before all ages, conceives of the work of salvation and *theosis*. He realizes it in time, in the Son. The Holy Spirit completes and perfects and adapts this work to people."²⁹ Second, God fashioned man in such a way that he has the natural capacity to transcend. From this activity of the Triune God, the whole humanity and indeed, the whole creation move towards divinization. This research, however, focuses only on discussing the divinization of man.

Phases/Dimensions of Divinization

From the definition cited above, several phases or dimensions of divinization can be inferred.³⁰ First, divinization has a *creational* dimension. *Theosis* implies that any created being, in virtue of its being a creature, is dependent on God. The account of the creation story testifies, "God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good" (Gen. 1:31). Therefore, every creature is ontologically good. From this, every creature has to move

²⁷ Petro B. T. Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis or Divinization," in *Studies in Eastern Christianity: Ukrain: Free University Series Monograph 25* (Toronto: Ukrainian Free University, 1977), 46.

²⁸ John Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 39.

²⁹ Stavropoulos, "Partakers of Divine Nature," 189.

³⁰ See Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis," 46-47. Related to the "Christological dimension" of divinization, see also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 35, 224, 230-234; for Christ as "recapitulator," see Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 41, 214; related to the "pneumatic moment" of divinization, see Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 34.

in a gradual process of divinization for it is destined to tend from God as the Alpha, through the loving and divinizing presence of God, to Him as the Omega.

The second moment or dimension of *theosis* is its christological moment. It is the presence of the *Logos* at the moment of creation through whom, in whom and for whom all good things come and by the mystery of incarnation, His public life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension, He founded the Church – a divinized and divinizing reality.

When He ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to guide and sanctify the Church. It is the *pneumatic* moment of *theosis*. With Christ, the Spirit is the transfigurer and co-divinizer of man: “Our union with God, the *theosis* which is objectively offered to us by the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, and ascended God, can be realized only in the Holy Spirit.”³¹ It is the Holy Spirit that is the principal agent of sanctification: “The Holy Spirit, sent by the risen Lord from the Father, is the divine source of sanctification of willing subjects: source of ontological state of “divine adoption”.”³²

Nature of Divinization and Deified Man

Thus, divinization or *theosis* consists of an active participation in the life and love of the Triune God through the process of assimilation of the creature to God.³³ However, this process of transformation from human to divine is not absolute but rather “relative, for it is not the transformation of our essence. Rather, it is natural, ethical, and in accordance with grace.”³⁴ St. Anastasius of Sinai defines *theosis* wonderfully with these words:

Theosis is elevation to what is better, but not reduction of our nature to something less, nor is it an essential change of our

³¹ Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” 188. See also Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 34; Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 111; J. Beganni, *Early Syriac Theology*, 73; and *UT*, 15.

³² Edward J. Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, Robert J. Daly, ed. (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 358. See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 84, 219.

³³ See Bilaniuk, “Mystery of Theosis,” 46- 47. See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 116.

³⁴ Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” 184.

human nature. A divine plan, it is the willing condescension of tremendous dimension by God, which he did for the salvation of others. That which is of God is that which has been lifted up to a greater glory, without its own nature changed.³⁵

Theosis, therefore, is union of human with the divine not by nature but by grace.

Likewise, St. Gregory Palamas rejected the idea of deification by nature, *i.e.*, that man should become consubstantial with God. Rather, the grace becomes the permanent quality of deified man.³⁶

Furthermore, José Antonio Aureada writes:

Despite the elevation of grace, man remains a mortal, human creature forever. Yet, because of this superadded elevation, man's natural divine imagery becomes more intense, indeed, in a qualitatively higher way deforming, now according to God's self-revelation in the intimacy and depth of his trinitarian life.³⁷

It is now clear that no human person can participate in the nature of God. St. Maximus says, "God has created us in order that we may become partakers of the divine nature, in order that we may enter into eternity, and that we may appear like unto Him, being deified by grace...."³⁸

Maximus the Confessor describes the deified state of man using Pauline texts in this manner:

The admirable Paul denied his own existence and did not know whether he possessed a life of his own: "I live no more,

³⁵ Ibid., quoting Anastasius of Sinai, "Concerning the Word," in *PG*, J.P. Migne, ed., 162 vols. (Paris, 1857-66), 89.77BC. See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 84.

³⁶ See Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas*, 176. See also Maximus the Confessor, "Ambigua" in *Patrologia Graeca (PG)*, J.P. Migne, ed., 54 vols. (Paris, 1857-66) 91.1088.

³⁷ José Antonio E. Aureada, "Language of the Grace of God: A Re-Evaluation of the Analogical Character of Sanctifying Grace according to St. Thomas Aquinas," (SThD diss., Roma: Pontificia Università di San Tomaso, 1994), 329.

³⁸ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 90, quoting St. Maximus the Confessor, "Ad Joannem cubicularium," Epist. 43, in *PG*, 91.640BC. See also St. John Damascene, "On Images," I, 19, in *PG*, 94.1249.

for Christ lives in me..." (Gal. 2:20)...Man, the image of God, becomes God by deification; he rejoices to the full in abandoning all that is his by nature...because the grace of the Spirit triumphs in him and because manifestly God alone is acting in him; thus God and worthy of God possess in all things one and the same energy, or rather, this common energy is the energy of God alone, since he communicates himself wholly to those who are worthy.³⁹

Old Testament

In the Book of Genesis, we find the divine descent of humanity and their relationship with God: "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him" (Gen. 1:26-27).⁴⁰

The divine calling, particularly after the fall of man, resembles a group character in the Israelite people whom God selected as his chosen people.⁴¹ Later on, this divine adoption⁴² took on an individual character in the persons of the pious kings like David and Solomon who were called "sons of God."⁴³

Theosis took on a further implication associated with the life that is to come in the glory of God.⁴⁴ Of paramount examples are the story of Enoch⁴⁵ and Elijah⁴⁶ who were both taken up to heaven. The ascensions of the two prefigure the future glory of man with God.

³⁹ Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 40, quoting Maximus the Confessor, "Ambigua," in *PG*, 91.1076BC.

⁴⁰ Stavropoulos, "Partakers of Divine Nature," 185. See also *CSDC*, 36.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² "This divine adoption," says Christoforos, "is nothing other than the call to all persons to become divine – a call to *theosis*" (*Ibid.*).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ See Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis," 51.

⁴⁵ From the letter to the Hebrews: "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God" (Heb. 11:5). See also Genesis 5:24; Sirach 44:16; 48:14.

⁴⁶ "And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11, *New American Bible*).

Moses, a great figure in the history of the chosen people of God, mirrors the image of man sharing in the divine power to teach and rule.⁴⁷ The prophets whose main task is to proclaim the message of Yahweh are, in some sense, divinized partakers in the mysteries of the divine knowledge and of the message of salvation. In the book of Psalms, it says, "You are gods and of you, the sons of the Most High" (Psalm 82:6) and the book of wisdom speaks of the imperishability of man: "For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him" (Wisdom 2:23).

From these Old Testament biblical accounts, inferences can be made as to the semblance of divinization: the creation of man after the image and likeness of God, the communal character of divine adoption in the Israelite people, the individual character of divine adoption of kings David and Solomon, the ascension to heaven of Enoch and Elijah, the sharing in the divine power to teach and rule of Moses, the prophets as partakers in the mysteries of the divine knowledge and the godliness and imperishability of man according to the book of Psalms and the book of Wisdom.

New Testament

Primarily, the idea of divinization can be found in the New Testament.⁴⁸ The Pauline letters suggest the reality of divinization. At one point, Paul talks about our adoption as sons of God:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!' So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir" (Gal. 4:4-7).⁴⁹

Paul in another instance speaks of the newness of life brought about by baptism: "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,

⁴⁷ See Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis," 51.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁹ Stavropoulos, "Partakers of Divine Nature," 185.

we too might live in the newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Paul exhorts that this newness received in Baptism, once lived in union with God till death, receives the glory of resurrection: "For if we have grown into union with him through death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).⁵⁰

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul stresses out the importance of perseverance to attain perfect maturity saying, "It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession by Christ [Jesus]" (Phil 3:12). To the same community, Paul mentions the citizenship of the baptized in heaven and bodily resurrection: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).⁵¹

The Gospels also give hints as to the doctrine of divinization is concerned. In the Gospel of Matthew, at one point, Jesus foretells his coming into glory: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne" (Mt. 25:31).⁵²

The gospel of John, especially the first chapter which talks about the divinity of Christ, reiterates the divine sonship of those who accept Christ, becoming the children of God: "Those who accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God" (Jn. 1:12).⁵³ John also points out the reason why God became man and was lifted up on the cross, *i.e.*, "so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn. 3:15-16).

⁵⁰ See Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis," 53.

⁵¹ Paul is hinting the final consummation of divinization which is the resurrection of the body. This final consummation of divinization, as Aureada writes, is the "image by likeness of glory" (Aureada, "Language of Grace of God," 307. See also *ST*, I, q 93, a 5).

⁵² Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis," 53.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

The explicit biblical text about deification is found in the second letter of Peter: "By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion and become *partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Pet. 1:4).⁵⁴

To sum up, *theosis* in the New Testament is associated with "the adoption of man, his participation in the incorruptibility of God and his mixture with the divine nature in indescribable glory and blessedness."⁵⁵

Patristic Teachings

The writings of the fathers of the Church are also of great importance to this study. Since this doctrine is championed by the Eastern Church, the writings of the Eastern Fathers will be used as chief references for this section. Saints Ireneus, Athanasius and Maximus, the Confessor, are among the Eastern Fathers whose writings will be considered representatives in order to show an overview of the patristic teachings on divinization.

Saints Ireneus, Athanasius and Maximus, the Confessor, are among the Eastern Fathers whose writings will be considered representatives in order to show an overview of the patristic teachings on divinization.

St Irenaeus was the first writer to present a consistent and well developed doctrine of divinization.⁵⁶ In fact he was the first one to capture the whole doctrine in these words: "God made Himself man, that man

⁵⁴ Emphasis mine. See David J. Melling, Dimitri Brandy, et al. eds., *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001). According to Palamas, the Apostle Paul wished to express the reality of our calling: "The reality of our participation in the very life of God...therefore, 'by nature' he means sanctifying and deifying grace" (Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas*, 178). See also *Unitatis redintegratio* (UR), 15. Aureada, quoting Joyce, writes: "The sanctifying grace with which we are endowed, communicates to us properties which in their essential nature are divine; that through it we are destined to share in the life and the beatitude of the Ever Blessed Trinity" (Aureada, "Language of the Grace of God," 273-274, quoting G.H. Joyce, *Catholic Doctrine of Grace* [London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1920], 39).

⁵⁵ Stavropoulos, "Partakers of Divine Nature," 185.

⁵⁶ See Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis," 56.

might become God.”⁵⁷ These words were also found in the writings of St. Athanasius,⁵⁸ St. Gregory of Nazianzus⁵⁹ and St. Gregory of Nyssa.⁶⁰

St. Irenaeus ventures to answer the question as to why God created man and his response:

In the beginning God fashioned Adam, not because he had need of man, but that he might have a being on whom to bestow his benefits....Nor did he order us to follow him because he needed our service, but because he thus conferred on us salvation....Our service of God does not afford God anything, nor has he need of human obedience; but he has granted, to those who follow him and serve him, life and incorruption and eternal glory.⁶¹

In this particular text, St. Irenaeus lays down the basic truth of man and the rest of the creation. Creation, in particular man, is God’s act of love. Divinization was envisioned by God at the moment of creation. Divinization happens when man is in union with God. From the cited text, union with God means following and serving God. Obedience and service of God, at the end, lead to salvation. Salvation means, from the point of view of man’s ultimate end, divinization (final consummation). St. Irenaeus writes:

We were not made gods at our beginning, but first we were made men, then, in the end, gods. God does this out of the purity of his goodness so that none may think him envious or ungenerous. ‘I have said you are gods, and all of you children of the Highest.’⁶²

⁵⁷ Lossky, *Image and Likeness*, 97, quoting Irenaeus, “Adversus haereses” V, preface, in *PG*, 7.1120.

⁵⁸ See *Ibid.* See also Athanasius, “De incarnatione verbi”, 54, in *PG*, 25.192B.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* See also Gregory of Nazianzus, “Poema dogmatica,” 10, 5-9, in *PG*, 37.465.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* See also Gregory of Nyssa, “*Oratio catechetica magna*,” 25, in *PG*, 45.65D.

⁶¹ Henry Bettenson, ed. and trans., *Early Christian Fathers: Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 66-67. See also Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, XXV. 3.

⁶² Bettenson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers*, 69.

Another great figure in defense of the doctrine of divinization is St. Athanasius. It was mentioned earlier in his work *De incarnatione verbi*, he sums up the true reason why God became man, *i.e.*, that man might become god: "If the works of the godhead had not taken place by means of the body, am would not have been made divine."⁶³

St. Athanasius formulated the truth of *theosis* in this way: "God became man, so that we might be made gods."⁶⁴ The mystery of Incarnation conquered "not only the moral abyss that separates a sinful being from God but also the distance between the infinite God and the finite man."⁶⁵

Furthermore, St. Athanasius made an excellent remark on the purpose of God creating man according to His own Image. In the same treatise, he further elaborates:

He did not merely create man in the same way as he created all the irrational creatures on earth; he made men 'after his own image,' giving a share even in the power of his own Word, so that they might have as it were shadows of the Word, and thus becoming 'rational,' might be able to continue in blessedness and live the true life, which is the life of the saints in paradise.⁶⁶

The rationality of man, therefore, has something to do with his calling. It is because of this rationality that man is capable to live the true life, the life of the saints in paradise.

St. Maximus the Confessor maintains that a divinized human person becomes all that God is except for identity in essence.⁶⁷ A divinized human person does not cease to be human and created when he participates in the

⁶³ Ibid., 289.

⁶⁴ Athanasius, "Concerning the Incarnation of the Word," in *PG*, , 25.192B.

⁶⁵ Bilaniuk, "Mystery of Theosis," 52.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 274.

⁶⁷ See Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 158. See also Jaroslav Pelican, *Spirit of Eastern Christendom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 267.

uncreated and divinizing energies⁶⁸ of God. Timothy Ware expresses it in this way:

Nor does the human person, when it ‘becomes god,’ cease to be human: We remain creatures while becoming god by grace, as Christ remained God when becoming man by the Incarnation. ‘The human being does not become God *by nature*, but merely a ‘created god,’ a god *by grace* or *by status*.⁶⁹

Theology of *Imago*

After discussing the concept of divinization, its biblical and patristic foundations, the theology of image from which divinization has its foothold, will now be discussed. The doctrine of divinization has the “image and likeness” as fundamental premise.⁷⁰ Since man is created in the image and likeness of God, he, therefore, is destined for a higher end.⁷¹ Is this capacity of man as the image of God to reach complete divinization purely natural or supernatural? What does “the image and likeness” mean?

Definition of Image

According to St. John Damascene, an image is “a likeness which re-presents the original, but which is in some way different from it.”⁷² St. Thomas defines *imago* (image) as “imitation, from which its name is also

⁶⁸ The Eastern Fathers maintain that “God remains incommunicable in essence. But God reveals Himself in His energies – grace. Hence, we come to know God not in His essence but energies. In the same way, we can become god not by nature but by grace or status as the doctrine of divinization teaches. God’s transcendence is seen in terms of His essence, and His immanence in terms of His energies. It is by means of His energies that God dwells with men. His energies are synonymous with His grace” (Lossky, *Mystical Theology of Eastern Church*, 73-80).

⁶⁹ Timothy Ware, *Orthodox Church* (Great Britain: Richard Clay & Company Ltd., 1963), 237.

⁷⁰ See Lossky, *Mystical Theology of Eastern Church*, 118.

⁷¹ “The openness to transcendence belongs to the human person alone: man is open to the infinite and to all created beings” (CSDC, 130).

⁷² James J. Meany, *The Image of God in Man according to the Doctrine of St. John Damascene* (SthD diss., Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1954), 14 quoting St. John Damascene, “Orationes de Imaginibus,” I, 9, in PG, 94.1240C.

derived.”⁷³ An image is a likeness and “likeness belongs to the ratio of image”⁷⁴ and “requires an equality of some sort (*aliqua adequatio*) in quality according to a proportion of qualities to another.”⁷⁵ Something is said to be the image of the original if it has in itself the resemblance of the latter. Thus, “an image is more or less perfect image in proportion to its degree of likeness with its exemplar.”⁷⁶

Another essential element of an image is that it represents the original. An image is “a likeness, a copy, a figure-in-relief of something else.”⁷⁷ It does not exist only for itself but to make present the original after which it is patterned.⁷⁸ Seeing the image one cannot but be reminded of the original.

We apply this general observation to the various kinds of images: artificial, natural and intellectual.⁷⁹

Perhaps, the statue of a man can best explain the artificial kind of image.

There exists a likeness between the two: the statue and the man. Something that which is in the man is possessed by the statue that is, the likeness, in this case, a physical likeness or likeness in shape or figure, or features.

As an example of the natural image, we take the example of a father and his son. The son resembles some features of his father. The son is the image of the father insofar as the son exhibits, somehow, some features of his father, *e.g.*, his eyes, lips, built-up and the like. But more than the physical likeness of the son to his father, the image of the son is more perfect than the image of the statue. Here, the son does not only exhibit physical likeness. The son has life like his father – he thinks, talks, acts, feels and

⁷³ Aureada, “Language of Grace of God”, 293, quoting *Summa Theologica* (ST) I, q. 93, a. 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 295, quoting ST, I. q.35, a.1.

⁷⁵ See Aureada, “Language of Grace of God”, 295.

⁷⁶ Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 14, quoting St. John Damascene, “Orationes de Imaginibus,” III, 16, 94, in PG, 1337A.

⁷⁸ See Meany, *Image of God in Man* 15.

⁷⁹ See Aureada, “Language of Grace of God”, 295.

does operative acts proper to his nature. In other words, the son shares in the very species of his father, *i.e.*, as being human. Therefore, the image, as the son is more perfect than the image as the statue “since the exemplary form involves the species itself by way of communicating its nature and its mode of being.”⁸⁰

Briefly: The son, as an image, is more perfect than that of the statue. It does share bodily or physical shape. It does share life – operative acts proper to one that has life – with his father.

The similarity, however, does not eliminate the dissimilarity between the exemplar and image. Indeed, an image has the likeness of the original but it does not make one the same as the other, for the image is not the original and the original is not the image.

Briefly, an image is a likeness – it entails similarity, not in all respects, with the original but by no means is identical with it.

Facets of Image of God in Creation⁸¹

Applying the concept of image to the whole creation in relation to God, the Creator, how can one say that the creation is the image of God? Or to be specific, in what manner is man the image of God? To gain a better appreciation of the answers to these queries, we shall divide this particular section into the three ways God is present in man namely:

Vestigium Dei

“There is a vestigial presence of God in all creation, whether irrational or rational, animate or inanimate. It is the imprint which God has left in what he has made.”⁸² The whole creation – living and non-living – are “like to God first and most commonly because they exist.”⁸³ This likeness is of a *vestigium* (trace). A trace “portrays as an effect portrays a cause, without achieving a likeness to it in species.”⁸⁴ Some beings, on the other

⁸⁰ Aureada, “Language of Grace of God”, 295.

⁸¹ See Ibid., “Language of Grace of God”, 299 - 308.

⁸² Ibid., 300.

⁸³ *ST*, I, q.93, a. 2.

⁸⁴ Aureada, “Language of Grace of God”, 300, quoting *ST*, I, q. 93, a.6.

hand, are higher than “the inanimate beings for they do not only exist but have life.”⁸⁵ Hence, living things have more perfect image than the non-living. In man, therefore, the vestigial likeness is in terms of *esse* (being) and *vita* (life).⁸⁶ Furthermore, being part of the visible creation, man, in virtue of his being corporeal (*i.e.*, of having a physical, material body) and being like them, therefore, is also a *vestigium Dei*.

Imago Naturalis Dei

Among all that exists, the rational creatures have far more perfect image of the Exemplar “because they know or understand;...as Augustine says ‘approach so near to God in likeness, that among all creatures nothing comes nearer to Him.’ It is clear, therefore, that intellectual creatures alone, properly speaking, are made to God’s image.”⁸⁷ Man “reflects the divine nature of God known in philosophy generally in terms of a likeness of *esse*, or likeness of life, and, by the special philosophical term of likeness in intelligence and love which flows from it.”⁸⁸ Likewise, being intelligent creatures like man, angels are image of God.

Imago Supernaturalis Dei

This *imago supernaturalis Dei* is effected by the sanctifying grace of God. Aureada clearly puts it this way:

By the *imago naturalis Dei*, man thinks and loves somewhat as God thinks and loves whereas by the *imago supernaturalis Dei* man not only operates intellectually as God does, but the object of this intellectual operation is God as He is revealed in Himself, *i.e.*, in his inter-trinitarian Life.⁸⁹

This is already a participation in the life of God, *theosis*.

⁸⁵ *ST*, I, q.93, a. 2.

⁸⁶ See Aureada, “Language of Grace of God”, 300.

⁸⁷ *ST*, I, q. 93, a. 2.

⁸⁸ Aureada, “Language of Grace of God”, 301, quoting *ST*, I, q. 93, a. 6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 305.

Image of God in Man

What does “in his own image” mean? This is the primary inquiry this particular sub-section is engaged. In what aspect does man mirror the Exemplar? Where does this image of God in man reside?

Sometimes some Fathers of the Church attribute the character of the image of God to the kingly office of man, *i.e.*, to his superiority and authority over the material world; to the spiritual aspect of human nature, in the soul; to the higher powers of man such as the intellect and free will; or to the characteristics of the soul.⁹⁰ St. John Damascene writes:

Man, who alone of all creatures is ‘to the image and likeness of God.’ Every man is called ‘to the image,’ because of the dignity of his mind and soul, inasmuch, namely, as it is incomprehensible, invisible, immortal, free, yes, and ruler, artisan, and builder. And ‘to the likeness’ by reason of virtue, and the God-like actions imitative of God....⁹¹

The image of God in man, as cited above, resides in man, particularly in his soul. This is God’s “unrepented gifts”⁹² to man. Man, therefore, cannot lose the image of God in him. It can be blurred by sin, though. Every man therefore, is endowed with unrepented gifts.

Furthermore, the intellect and the will are constituents of the image of God in man for “the intellect is intermediate between God and the body,”⁹³ and “since the divine nature is endowed with free-will, then also is man as

⁹⁰ See Vladimir Lossky, *Mystical Theology of Eastern Church*, 115. See also St. Macarius of Egypt, “Homily on the Spirit,” XXII, 1, 6, 7, in *PG*, 34.557-61; see also Man-tzaridiz, *Deification of Man*, 16. Referring to the “intellect,” see Clement of Alexandria, “Exhortation,” 10, in *PG*, 8.212C-213A; and Gregory of Nyssa, “On Virginitly,” 12, in *PG*, 46.369C.

⁹¹ Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 20 quoting St. John Damascene, “De Virtute et Vitio” in *PG*, 95.97AB.

⁹² St. John Damascene used the term “unrepented gifts” to designate the concept of ‘natural things’ which God bestowed on man. ‘Natural things’ are those which man receives from the Creator, and which he possesses independently of his own activity. It is the ‘natural endowments’ – life, reason, will, senses and the like – which every man possesses by reason of his nature (See Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 21-23). See also Lossky, *Mystical Theology of Eastern Church*, 124.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 25.

Its image.”⁹⁴ St. Thomas says “since man is said to be the image of God by reason of his intellectual nature, he is the most perfectly like God according to that in which he can best imitate God in his intellectual nature.”⁹⁵

For his part, St. Gregory Palamas writes: “We are not able to call human just the soul or just the body, but rather, both together, of which it is said that they were created by God in his own image.”⁹⁶ Also, St. Gregory of Nyssa adds: “For this reason, the Word of God in saying that man was made in the image of God included everything in a comprehensive phrase. It was the same as saying that he created human nature to be participant in every good.”⁹⁷ Thus, the image of God does not refer only to one specific element, body or soul, but to the totality of the human nature in its entirety.

To reconcile those who claim that it is in the soul, and those who said that it is in both the body and soul, we turn to St. Thomas who writes: “God’s likeness in the manner of an image is to be found in man as regards his mind; but as regards his other parts only in the manner of a trace.”⁹⁸

Image and Likeness Differentiated

At this point, it is beneficial to cite the difference between “image” and “likeness” as St. John Damascene, in his treatise *De Virtute et Vitio* recommends:

That which is ‘to the image’ every man possesses, for God does not repent of His gifts. But rare are those who are ‘to the likeness’; they are only the virtuous and the saints, and those who imitate, as far as this is possible to men, the goodness of God.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ *ST*, I, q.93, a. 4 in Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *Summa Theologica*, Complete Eng. Ed., 5 vols. (Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981).

⁹⁶ Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” 186, quoting Gregory of Palamas, “Prosopopoiea,” in *PG*, 150.1361C. See also Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 116.

⁹⁷ Ibid., quoting Gregory of Nyssa, “Concerning the Creation of Man”, in *PG*, 44.184B. Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 116.

⁹⁸ Aureada, “Language of the Grace of God,” 301, quoting *ST*, I, q. 93, a. 6.

⁹⁹ Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 20, quoting St. John Damascene, “De Virtute et Vitio” in *PG*, 95.97AB.

That which distinguishes a person from another is the way he makes use of the natural endowments, the unrepented gifts. These gifts are “all good, and are given for a good purpose by Goodness Itself. But the way in which we use them, it is this which constitutes virtue or vice.”¹⁰⁰

Since “image” means the rational nature of man and all the natural endowments proper to the nature of man, or which constitute the nature of man, it is static in character, something permanent. The “likeness”, on the other hand, is dynamic inasmuch as it connotes the idea of acquiring virtues.¹⁰¹

The link between “to the image” and “to the likeness” is this: “‘To the image’ means the intellect and free-will in man, whereas ‘to the likeness’ refers to the use of these faculties in order to gain meritorious acts by way of ‘similarity in virtue, so far as this is possible.’”¹⁰² Man, due to the image of God in him, has to assimilate God in virtues to be “like” Him, *i.e.*, to live a just or saintly or godly life. Becoming virtuous is what makes man become more “like” God. St. Thomas writes that the image of God in man can be seen in three ways:

First, inasmuch as man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Secondly, inasmuch as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Thirdly, inasmuch as man knows and loves God perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of glory... The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third only in the blessed.¹⁰³

These three ways which St Thomas pointed out are, in fact, embodied, as we have essayed to demonstrate above, the concept of “image and likeness.” The first – “the natural aptitude for understanding and loving which consists in the very nature of the mind” – is the image and is found

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰¹ Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 21.

¹⁰² Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 25. See also *ST*, I, q. 93, 9.

¹⁰³ *ST*, I, q. 93, a. 4.

in all men. The second – “man actually and habitually knows and loves God” – implies divinization “on-the-go” which is the result of grace and acquisition of virtues. The third – “man knows and loves God perfectly” – is the consummation of divinization or “image by likeness of glory.”¹⁰⁴ “The first stage of image then is found in all men, the second only in the just, and the third only in the blessed.”¹⁰⁵ These are the degrees of intensity of God’s presence in man.

Christological Dimension of Image of God in Man

It is quite clear that the image of God in man dwells in the rationality of man and man is rational, in a more concrete manner, “because he was created in the Image of Christ.”¹⁰⁶ St. Athanasius, in one of his writings, says, “In His own image He made them, having also given them a share in the power of His own Logos, so that cleaving to the Logos like a shadow and having become rational, they might be able to remain in the state of blessedness.”¹⁰⁷

Thus, man has the christological structure in him. Man is a creator because he is the image of the Logos Who is the Supreme Creator.¹⁰⁸ He is sovereign because Christ is the almighty Lord and King.¹⁰⁹ This is what St. John Damascene called thse “royal dimension” of the image of God in man. Creativity and development flows from man’s rationality and freedom. The rationality and freedom in man makes him capable to rule both himself and the world outside him.

Man has dominion over himself and the rest of creation. By the fact that man enjoys the freedom of the will and the capacity for ruling, he is an image of a King. Man’s shared kingship with God rules both the external world and the world within himself. Since man was made “to the image of God, rational and intelligent and free, he rightly received dominion over

¹⁰⁴ Aureada, “Language of the Grace of God,” 307.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. See also *ST*, I, q. 93, a. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 25.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., quoting Athanasius, “On the Incarnation of the Logos,” 3, in *PG*, 25.101B.

¹⁰⁸ See Ibid., 26. See also Clement of Alexandria, “Paidagogos,” II, 10, in *PG*, 8.497B.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. See also Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Creation of Man,” 4, in *PG*, 44.136BC.

the earthly things from the common Creator and Ruler of all.”¹¹⁰ “He is responsible for the creation, the recapitulation and consciousness of all that has been brought into being, because his archetype, Christ, is the recapitulator and savior of all men.”¹¹¹ Again, man has dominion also over the world within him – the irrational part in him. It has been explicitly said that the image of God in man resides in the soul. But man is made up of body and soul. The body, therefore, is a servant of the soul to be ruled, and “to rule over the body, with its passions and impulses, this is most proper to the rational soul; because of this superior dominion, it is more to the image of God than angels.”¹¹²

Briefly, the image of God in man is primarily on the rationality of man – his intellect and free will and this image is more concretely patterned in Christ who is the perfect Image of the invisible God. Hence, the image of God in man has a christological structure.

Moral Likeness to God

Through performing virtuous acts and God-like acts, one can actually become “like” God. St. John Damascene writes:

Every man is called “‘to the likeness’ by reason of virtue and the God-like actions imitative of God, that is to say, by our human love towards all men, commiserating and loving our fellow-servants, showing all mercy and sympathy.”¹¹³

In other words, when one gives alms to the poor out of love, he is like God who loves the poor. When he shows kindness to the stranger, he is like God who is kind. When he does not speak ill towards his fellow, he is like God who is good.¹¹⁴ The list of God-like acts imitative of God goes on. As he performs those acts, he becomes virtuous. As he grows in virtue,

¹¹⁰ Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 29.

¹¹¹ Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 26. See also Theodoret of Cyrus, “On Genesis,” 20, in *PG*, 80.109B.

¹¹² Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 31.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 41, quoting St. John Damascene, “De Virtute et Vitio” in *PG*, 95.97AB.

¹¹⁴ See Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 42.

he becomes more and more like God. This likeness to God is not only transitory. It acquires a permanent state for virtue signifies permanence.

Briefly, it has been noted in the previous discussion that divinization is not absolute but relative and has an ethical dimension. Moral likeness belongs to this dimension. The image of God in man is common to all men, but this moral dimension of divinization is also possible to all men, it all “depends upon us to use God’s gifts for the purpose for which He gave them, or not.”¹¹⁵

Primacy of Ontological Likeness

Ontological likeness is a prerequisite of the moral likeness for the latter is unattainable without the former. Divinization “on-the-go,” as initial stage of the process towards its final consummation - “image by likeness of glory,” happens through the imparting of the divine life which is classified as ontological likeness, theologically speaking.

By the reception of the sacrament of Baptism, the baptized becomes a new creation, united to Christ because the one who receives the Spirit at baptism is divinized, he receives a likeness to God which is far superior to that which he already has, the *imago naturalis Dei*:

At Baptism the “Holy Spirit dwells in the soul of men, making them sons of God. They are sons ‘by grace and institution’. The Holy Spirit “divinizes” them, by imparting to them a share in the divinity of Christ, Who is God “by nature”. Because of this participation in the Divinity of Christ, man enters upon a “new creation”, a new existence, a second birth, a new life.”¹¹⁶

This is ontological likeness to God.

It is important to note that the imparting of ontological likeness is God’s gratuitous gift to man. However, it is never a one-way path. It also requires man’s freedom of choice to accept it. It connotes man’s explicit

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 58.

cooperation and yes, every man possesses the capacity to make free choice for God has given him the gift of freedom. This freedom is imbedded in *imago naturalis Dei*.

The reception of ontological likeness takes precedence over moral likeness: "In order actually to make the free choice by which he obtains the moral likeness, man's capacity must be supplemented and deepened by the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁷

Why is this so? Is man's natural capacity not sufficient to make that "free choice" by which he obtains moral likeness?

Prior to the reception of ontological likeness, man, subject to corruption and death, is constantly spurred to sin and becomes a slave to it:

Without the grace of God, the only thing he can do is sin: When God does not operate within us, all that we perform is sinful.¹¹⁸ And even when he strives to attain virtue, he ends up in arrogance and self-adulation. If man is removed from God's grace and is without hope of deification, he is incapable of surmounting the temptations of the flesh, of wealth and vainglory. Even if he manages, momentarily, to rise above these, he is taken over by vanity at the thought that he has attained perfection, and thus falls once more into sinful ways.¹¹⁹

"Apart from union with Christ, we are as crushed and useless vessels."¹²⁰ The baptized person through the indwelling of the Spirit receives new life, and thus, receives a new power with which virtue can be pursued.

Briefly, every man has a natural *virtus* for virtuous acts in so far as he is the image of God, arise from him precisely as *imago naturalis*

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁸ Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 63 quoting Palamas, "Homily," 33, in *PG*, 151.416D-417A.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 63. See also St. Clement of Alexandria, "Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?," 21, 1, in *Faith of Early Fathers*, Vol. 1: *A Source-Book of Theological and Historical Passages from the Christian Writings of the Pre-Nicene and Nicene Eras*, William Jurgens, trans. (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 436 and Origen, "Commentaries on the Psalms," 4, in Ibid., 485.

¹²⁰ Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 63.

Dei. However, the baptized who bears the ontological likeness possesses a supernatural *virtus*¹²¹ which is sufficient for virtuous acts. Natural *virtus* is insufficient for virtuous acts, as presented above.

Theology of Participation

The incarnation of Christ is God's initiative, indeed, a gratuitous gift, for man to attain his ultimate calling: *theosis*, "union with God made possible by grace."¹²² This participation, therefore, in the divine life is a participation of grace. God made man after his image that man might naturally and potentially participate into that calling. Yet, this calling of sharing in the divine life is supernatural in character: "Graced participation has for its primary character its supernaturality since it is primarily a participation in something which is essentially supernatural, i.e., God under the formality of deity."¹²³ Moreover, "it is being assimilated to something intimate in God that makes it proper to speak of this participation as supernatural."¹²⁴ Hence, with so much love, God bestowed in man the means sufficient enough to attain such a calling.

The means to attain this calling has been given to us in and through the Church: "In the church he has given us all of the objective presuppositions and all the necessary means to achieve our goal."¹²⁵ We may bracket the means to achieve our goal into two aspects: objective and subjective.

The sacraments are objective means by which we participate in the life of the divine. Yet, "the work of our *theosis*, our union with God, is not transmitted to us in some kind of mechanical fashion. Our weakened

¹²¹ Damascene thinks of only one virtue (supernatural *virtus*) in various names: the new life, new existence, the divine sonship, the new image, the new likeness. It characterizes internal, permanent, supernatural principle of operation, infused by God at Baptism. He thinks of the universal agent, equipping man for all the particular virtuous acts (See *Ibid.*, 65).

¹²² Stavropoulos, "Partakers of Divine Nature," 188. See also Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas*, 176; See also Maximus the Confessor, "Ambigua" in *PG*, 91.1088 and also Aureada, "Language of the Grace of God," 329.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹²⁵ Stavropoulos, "Partakers of Divine Nature," 188. See also Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 113, 143; and CCC, 760, quoting St. Epiphanius, "Panarion," 1, 1,5 in *PG*, 41.181C.

human nature will not be transformed magically. The change will happen in conjunction with our own efforts.”¹²⁶ Our free acceptance, our devotion in the reception of the sacraments and our following the life of Christ are the necessary subjective presuppositions.

This particular section talks about the theology of participation. Under this section, sacramental dimension and moral dimension will be discussed. The former corresponds to the objective presupposition, the latter to the subjective presupposition. The former also implicates ontological likeness which is a prerequisite of the moral likeness. The direct relationship between the sacramental and the moral life, between the objective presupposition and subjective presupposition is obvious: “If man continues in sin,” says Palamas, “baptism and the rest of the sacraments of the Church will do him no good at all.”¹²⁷

Sacramental Dimension

All the sacraments instituted by Christ are means to sanctification.¹²⁸ Through the sacraments, man is made possible “to enter freely and personally into communion with the divinizing grace which the Logos of God bestowed upon human nature in assuming it.”¹²⁹ However, due to the close link of these two sacraments¹³⁰—Baptism, through which new life has been given to us and, Eucharist which incorporates us with Christ¹³¹—in the doctrine of Divinization, they are the focus of the discussion in this section.

Baptism

St. John Damascene has linked Baptism in his teaching on the ontological likeness of man to God. For him, man’s natural capacity is

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 43 quoting Palamas, “Homily,” 38, in *PG*, 151.481D-484A.

¹²⁸ See CCC, 1123. See also Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 41.

¹²⁹ Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 42. See also Palamas, “Homily,” 5, in *PG*, 151.64D.

¹³⁰ “From these two acts (Baptism and Eucharist) depends our entire salvation, for in them is recapitulated the whole of the divine-human economy” (Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas*, 160). Furthermore, “redeeming, sanctifying and deifying grace is bound up with baptism and the Eucharist” (Ibid., 161).

¹³¹ See Ibid., 159.

insufficient for virtues which constitute moral likeness without receiving the sacrament of Baptism.¹³² Indeed, St. John Damascene made a valid point of departure for “man’s entry into the Church of Christ and the start of his personal participation in deification and regeneration in Christ are effected by the sacrament of baptism.”¹³³ The Catechism also states: “Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to the life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.”¹³⁴ This means that the indwelling of the Spirit is made possible through baptism and wherever the Spirit is, He sanctifies.

Hence, the baptized becomes “a new creature, an adopted son of God, who has become a partaker of the divine nature, member of Christ and co-heir with him and a temple of the Spirit.”¹³⁵ This is divinization “on-the-go.”¹³⁶

The baptized has been cleansed from all his sins – original and personal and has received sanctifying grace.¹³⁷ This sanctifying grace enables

¹³² See Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 63.

¹³³ Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 45. See also Palamas, “Homily”, 16, PG, 151.216A and CCC, 683, 1215.

¹³⁴ CCC, 1213. See also UR, 22.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 1265. As “new creature,” see St. Cyprian of Carthage, “To Donatus,” 4, in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 1, 548; as “adopted son of God,” see St. Athanasius, “Discourses against Arians,” 2, 59, in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 1, 766; as “partaker of the divine nature,” see St. Methodius of Philippi, “On Chastity,” 8, 8, in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 613. See also UR, 22.

¹³⁶ “On-the-go” is a coined term referring to the beginning of the life-long process of divinization, as leading to the final consummation of divinization, the blessedness in heaven. As Christoforos describes: “*Theosis* is achieved little by little, through the step-by-step spiritualization of our human nature” (Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” 186).

¹³⁷ See CCC, 1263. Sanctifying grace is commonly called the grace of justification. Actual grace introduces the state of sanctifying grace or preserves and augments it where it already exists (see Joseph Pohle, *Grace: Actual and Habitual: Dogmatic Treatise* [London: B. HERDER, 1914], 271). And “justification” is defined as “the transition from that state wherein man is born of the first Adam, to the state of grace and of the adoption of the sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Savior” (Ibid, 301, quoting Council of Trent, Session VI, 4). Another definition of “sanctifying (justifying) grace”: “An unmerited, supernatural gift, imparted to the soul by the Holy Ghost, by which we are made just, children of God, and heirs of Heaven” (Ibid., 328). Sanctifying grace is regarded as *habitus entitativus* (i.e., “entitative habit”) but it can be increased by good works (Ibid., 384). It is also quite important, at least, to distinguish habitual or sanctifying grace from actual grace. Actual grace is a supernatural gift by which rational creatures are enabled to

him to believe, to hope and to love God through the theological virtues. It also enables him to live and act under the prompting of the Spirit through the gifts of the Spirit. It makes the baptized grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Upon baptism the person receives an indelible spiritual mark – “a permanent principle”¹³⁸ – of his belonging to Christ that no sin can erase. Hence, Baptism, once received, cannot be repeated.

He who is baptized becomes a member of the Body of Christ, the Church, for “Baptism incorporates us into the Church...the People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends the entire natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races and sexes.”¹³⁹

To sum up, baptism is the starting point (divinization “on-the-go”) of participation in the divine life. It is through it that we receive the grace of divine adoption (*i.e.*, ontological likeness) that helps us become more and more like God by performing the acts imitative of God, the virtues (*i.e.*, moral likeness).

Eucharist

The divine life received in Baptism is sustained and nourished and perfected by the Eucharist:

Since we are composed of a double nature, we have need of a double rebirth, and likewise double nourishment. Now then, the birth is given by water and the Spirit, that is, by Baptism, and the nourishment is the very Bread of Life.¹⁴⁰

perform salutary acts; a transient supernatural help enabling man to work out his eternal life (See Ibid., 2-3). Salutary acts are those directed to the attainment of sanctifying grace and the supernatural end of man. In relation to sanctifying grace, actual grace is inferior, being merely a means to an end (See Ibid., 14-15).

¹³⁸ St. John Damascene employs the term ‘permanent principle’ in reference to the indelible character of Baptism upon the person. By reason of this permanent principle, the person can continue his pursuit for virtues with vigor. By so doing, the person increases his participation in the goodness of God until he arrives at eternal participation in heaven (See Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 72).

¹³⁹ CCC, 1267.

¹⁴⁰ See Meany, *Image of God in Man*, 57 quoting St. John damascene, “De Fide Orthodoxa,” IV, 13, in PG, 94.1137D.

In the Eucharist it is Christ who is consumed, “the mind is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given us.”¹⁴¹ Pope Benedict XVI says, “The transformation of the bread and the wine into Christ’s Body and Blood is in fact the principle of the divinization of creation itself.”¹⁴²

By receiving the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, one participates in the Divinity of Christ in the most intimate way: “The Holy Eucharist brings about his advance towards ‘likeness’ and his full union with Christ.”¹⁴³ Also, those who partake in the Body of Christ in the Eucharist “communicate in Christ and have a share of His Flesh and Divinity ...and are united to one another.”¹⁴⁴

It becomes now clear to us that the Eucharist perfects the participation in the life of the divine received in Baptism and with our participation in the Eucharist we are intensely united to one another with the hope of attaining the glory which God has prepared for us. The Eucharist points to, and in fact, assures us, the eschatological end where we see God face to face in heaven – “the process of sanctification reaches perfection.”¹⁴⁵

Moral Dimension

Moral life is fundamental to man’s deification. It is not, however, something autonomous but the fruit of his communion with Christ.¹⁴⁶ The divinizing grace, which man receives at baptism, “does not stagnate within him...but operates and dynamically manifests in a life lived according to Christ.”¹⁴⁷ This section stresses out that “man’s part in the task of regeneration and deification, which are achieved by God, is of an existential, not simply a mental, nature.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCCC)* Philippine Ed. (Philippines: World and Life Publications, 2005), 271.

¹⁴² Benedict XVI, “God’s life comes to us in the Eucharist,” in *L’osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, no. 25 (1949) – 21 June 2006, 1.

¹⁴³ Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 51.

¹⁴⁴ Meany, *Image and Likeness of God*, 58.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ See Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 61.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

This section is divided into two sub-sections: life of prayer and life lived in virtues. These sub-sections do not intend to expound thoroughly the whole matter. To simply give a general and panoramic view of the subject matter is the goal.

Prayer Life

One of the important aspects of spiritual life is the prayer life. This is man's response to the faith received at Baptism. At Baptism, the newly baptized also received the initial faith which ought to be cultivated to maturity and this is made possible through prayer.

Prayer, as man's response to the invitation of God, involves the whole person, his whole life. Every aspect of life must be cultivated by prayer: "The religiously mature person prays not only often, but also well. His prayer is an expression of his faith and his love...."¹⁴⁹ More than the commandment to pray, the mature Christian prays not because he has to but because he wants to. Prayer, for him is simply a part of his life, something which flows naturally from his faith and his love.

The *Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC)*, on the essence of prayer, says: Prayer is a "loving, conscious, personal relationship with God, our all-loving, good Father, who has adopted us through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁰ The essential element of prayer is the conscious giving of oneself to God and this giving of oneself to God in prayer must be centered on the two most precious gifts which God has given to man – the Eucharist and the word of God.¹⁵¹

The attitude why one ought to pray must be clarified. One prays not because God needs his prayer. God does not need his prayer. It is man, himself who needs prayer, and that "only through prayer will he learn to know God and deepen his intimacy with God."¹⁵² Furthermore, "man is

¹⁴⁹ Killgallon and Weber, *Beyond Commandments* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 88.

¹⁵⁰ *Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC)*, New Ed. (Manila: Word & Life Publications, 1997), 1475.

¹⁵¹ Killgallon and Weber, *Beyond Commandments*, 103.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 88.

never more truly himself, never farther removed from the brutes, than when he prays, for in praying he uses his highest faculties for the highest purpose in the most perfect and exalted way,¹⁵³ for prayer is communication with God, conversation with God. In fact, “union with God cannot take place outside prayer, for prayer is a personal relationship with God.”¹⁵⁴

Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. Christ prayed without ceasing and has united prayer to good works, and good works to prayer.¹⁵⁵ “All his life is a prayer because he is in a constant communion of love with the Father.”¹⁵⁶

In our times, “the greatest separation is between our prayer/worship on the one side, and our moral life on the other.”¹⁵⁷ The prevalent cases of dishonesty, corruption and injustice, in all facets of life show that we are not fully matured Christians. The attitude we have in prayer reflects the maturity of faith we have. Our churches are filled with “pious believers” asking for the intercession even of saints whom we find ourselves related with. Why do we not bring this attitude in our workplaces for “it is possible to offer frequent and fervent prayer even at the market place or strolling alone. It is possible also in your place of business, while buying or selling, or even while cooking.”¹⁵⁸

Life lived in Virtues

According to Palamas, “man’s recovery and regeneration do not depend on the development of his purely mental capacities or on accurate knowledge about material things, but on the purity of his heart and the fulfillment of God’s will.”¹⁵⁹ Living a virtuous life, therefore, connotes holiness of life and following God’s will. How do we live a life of holiness, then? How do we know the will of God?

¹⁵³ Ibid., 71.

¹⁵⁴ Lossky, *Mystical Theology of Eastern Church*, 206.

¹⁵⁵ See CCC, 2745.

¹⁵⁶ CCCC, 542.

¹⁵⁷ CFC, 1472.

¹⁵⁸ CCCC, 576. See also St. John Chrysostom, “Ecloga de oratione,” 2, in *PG*, 6.585.

¹⁵⁹ Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, 68.

The most initial and immediate moral consequence of union with God is man's breaking-off of all his dealings with sin¹⁶⁰ for "if sin signifies the breaking-off of communion with God and submission to Satan, and that, conversely communion with Christ is expressed through sinlessness and holiness."¹⁶¹

God's will can be known by us either through the commandments He has given us, or through the examples of Christ.¹⁶² Christ has given us the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk. 12: 30) and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:31). The root of all virtue is love of God:

By practicing against his passions and practicing virtue, man cultivates the love of goodness and of the source of goodness, who is God Himself...he who loves God keeps His commandments, and he who keeps God's commandment loves God (See Jn. 14:21, 23)¹⁶³. Love of God is the start of the believer's moral life, its way and its crowning glory.¹⁶⁴

It is important to note that the love of God bears fruit in the form of the love of neighbor. Hence, the teaching on love takes as its point of reference God, the love of God and is expressed in the world by loving our neighbors.

Virtue is defined as "an operative good habit."¹⁶⁵ It connotes doing – habits of doing. It implies also morally good actions of our free-will. It may be also defined as "a habitual and firm disposition to do the good,"¹⁶⁶ the goal of which is to become like God.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ See Ibid., 62.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁶² See Ibid., 70.

¹⁶³ Ibid. See also Palamas, "Natural Chapters," 58, in *PG*, 150.1161D-1164A.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Paul Glenn, *Tour of Summa* (Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978), 140. See also Lactantius, "Divine Institutions," 6,5,10, in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 641.

¹⁶⁶ *CCCC*, 377.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 377.

Since the goal of virtue or virtuous acts is to become like God, becoming virtuous is indispensable in the doctrine of divinization. The image of God in man which resides in the soul, manifested in the intellect and will, is perfected by virtues, which is the “habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to reason and faith.”¹⁶⁸ Hence, virtue “makes its subject good, and makes the subject’s work good.”¹⁶⁹

“Virtue belongs to the soul.”¹⁷⁰ It perfects the power of the soul, the intellect and the will. All virtues, insofar as they perfect the cognitive and volitive powers of the soul, are either intellectual (of the order of understanding) or moral (of the order of the will).¹⁷¹ It is in this aspect that St. Thomas defined virtue as the “right reason in action.”¹⁷² As to the difference between the two, an intellectual virtue belongs to the order of knowing. They give knowledge of what ought to be done. A moral virtue, on the other hand, is a will-virtue. It has to do with acting or choosing in the light of knowledge.¹⁷³

Human virtues, both intellectual and moral, are acquired by human effort.¹⁷⁴ They can be acquired “by education, by deliberate acts and by perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts, purified and elevated by the divine grace.”¹⁷⁵ However, these virtues are “rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man’s faculties for participation in the divine nature: for theological virtues relate directly to God.”¹⁷⁶

Unlike human virtues, theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) are infused into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the very foundation of Christian moral activity and give life to all the moral virtues.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁸ CCC, 1804.

¹⁶⁹ Paul Glenn, *Tour of Summa*, 140.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ See Ibid., 140.

¹⁷² CCC, 1806. See also *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 2.

¹⁷³ See Glenn, *Tour of Summa*, 143.

¹⁷⁴ See CCC, 1804.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1810.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 1812.

¹⁷⁷ See CCC, 1813.

Concerning the thought of St. John Damascene on the ontological likeness of man to God, theological virtues belong to this category. Just as Baptism makes the person “a new creature, an adopted son of God, who has become a partaker of the divine nature,” theological virtues make the person capable of acting as a child of God. Just as the ontological likeness is a prerequisite of moral likeness, theological virtues are prerequisites of human virtues.

Theology of the Eucharist

The theology of the Eucharist is embodied on these four various themes: Sacrifice, Thanksgiving, Holy Communion, and Eschatological Banquet. These four themes are closely connected to one another.

Eucharist as Sacrifice

The essence of sacrifice points to the fundamental truth that God is supreme. The oblation of offerings or gifts to Him alone is an acknowledgment of His supreme dominion over all.¹⁷⁸ “The truth is man by nature recognizes that there exists someone who is above him. His recognition of his finiteness redounds to an acclamation of the power of someone above who has power over him and the rest of the creation.”¹⁷⁹

Sacrifices were gifts which the creature offered his Creator. These gifts were the first fruits and the first-born of his edible or clean animals.¹⁸⁰ In the Old Testament, Melchisedech,¹⁸¹ by offering bread and wine to God, prefigured the Eucharist which Christ instituted at the last supper. The Paschal rite which is a commemoration of the deliverance of the people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt also prefigured the Paschal sacrifice of

¹⁷⁸ See Francis J. Wengier, *Eucharist – Sacrifice* (U.S.A.: Bruce Publishing, 1955), 8.

¹⁷⁹ Clifford Howell, *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1977), 116.

¹⁸⁰ See Richard W. Grace, *Sacrifice of Christ* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1937), 16.

¹⁸¹ See Robert A. Sungenis, *Not by Bread Alone: Biblical and Historical Evidence for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Catholic Mass* (U.S.A.: Queenship Publishing, 2000), 25-28.

Christ on the Cross.¹⁸² “It was in Didache, where, for the first time, the term ‘sacrifice’ applied to the Eucharist.”¹⁸³

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is defined as “an external and social offering of some acceptable gift made to God alone by a legitimate representative of the community, to adore Him, to thank Him for His blessings, to ask Him for his Help and to make satisfaction for sins committed.”¹⁸⁴ From this initial definition, the offering of sacrifice has a fourfold purpose, namely: adoration, thanksgiving, petition and atonement.¹⁸⁵ Thus, James O’Connor’s defines sacrifice as:

The consecration and offering to God of some material reality intended to signify the internal dispositions of the one who offers it. It comes about as the necessary consequence of the recognition that we, as creatures, are totally dependent on God, whose help we need in all things; that he is infinitely good and worthy of adoration and praise; and that as sinners, we have offended him and alienated ourselves from him.¹⁸⁶

His definition underscores the two aspects of sacrifice, namely: the external, which is the material reality and the internal, which is the disposition of the offerer. Similarly, E. Garcia categorizes them into interior sacrifice and the exterior sacrifice. The former talks about offering one’s life – one’s heart and good works – to God. The latter speaks of the ritual offering to God performed by a legitimate minister.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² See William W. Baum, *Teaching of Cardinal Cajetan on the Sacrifice of the Mass: A Study in Pre-Tridentine Theology* (Rome: Pontificae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1958), 4.

¹⁸³ Raymond Moloney, *Problems in Theology: The Eucharist* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 79.

¹⁸⁴ E. Garcia, *Holy Eucharist* (Manila: UST Printing Office, 1992), 47.

¹⁸⁵ See Grace, *Sacrifice of Christ*, 18; See also Wengier, *Eucharist – Sacrifice*, 118.

¹⁸⁶ James T. O’Connor, *Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 301.

¹⁸⁷ See E. Garcia, *Holy Eucharist*, 48. See also Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us: Eucharist, Heart of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 48. He comments on the “internal” or “interior” sacrifice: contrite spirit is the true sacrifice (*Ibid.*).

In a broader sense, sacrifice is “the giving of a gift as a sign of self-giving. It is the transfer of ownership over a gift to signify my acknowledgement that I belong to God.”¹⁸⁸ Moreover, sacrifice is man’s “desire, as a sinner, to make atonement to God for his sin.”¹⁸⁹

Elements and Conditions of True Sacrifice

There are four elements which are present in every sacrifice.¹⁹⁰ First, people come together to some holy place – altar. Second, the rituals are led by a specially authorized person in charge of worship – priest. Third, the gift from the community is placed on the altar by the priest. Then the priest or the minister usually does something to it to show that the community is now ceasing to possess it - immolation. After which, the whole act of worship ends with a community-meal at which those present eat or drink together whatever it was put on the altar.

Furthermore, Garcia gives the four conditions for a true sacrifice.¹⁹¹ The four conditions are as follows: 1) Matter: It concerns with the sensible gift possessed by man. 2) Form: The gift which is offered to God must be destroyed or changed. 3) Minister: The one who performs the ritual must be a lawfully deputed priest. 4) Purpose: Whatever the purpose, be it for adoration, thanksgiving, petition, or atonement, it must be offered to God alone.

*Eucharist: True Sacrifice*¹⁹²

Applying the four conditions of the true sacrifice to the Eucharist, as mentioned by Garcia, the Eucharist is, indeed, a true Sacrifice for it has all the essential elements required for a true sacrifice.¹⁹³ The bread and wine

¹⁸⁸ Moloney, *Problems in Theology: The Eucharist*, 215.

¹⁸⁹ Grace, *Sacrifice of Christ*, 1.

¹⁹⁰ See Howell, *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*, 116.

¹⁹¹ See E. Garcia, *Holy Eucharist*, 50-51.

¹⁹² See *Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life: Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year 2000*, Robert R. Barr, trans. (Pasay: Paulines Publishing House, 1999), 83-85.

¹⁹³ See E. Garcia, *Holy Eucharist* 58-62.

constitute the matter of the sacrifice.¹⁹⁴ The mystical destruction of the victim by the consecration of the species of bread and wine constitute the form.¹⁹⁵ In fact, “the action of the Mass whereby it is constituted as a sacrifice is the consecration.”¹⁹⁶ “Consecration,” says Cajetan in Baum’s estimation, “is the sacramental immolation of the Body and Blood of Christ, representing the bloody immolation of the Passion of Christ, not simply because of the words but because the sacramental separation of the Eucharistic species signifies the real separation of Christ’s Blood from His Body at the time of Death.”¹⁹⁷ To wit, “the two separate formulae of consecration”¹⁹⁸ is “a sign instituted by Christ as the sign of His sacrificial Death.”¹⁹⁹ The priest who officiates the Mass is the minister. The whole act of worship is offered to God alone.

Eucharist and Cross

There is a question regarding the celebration of the Eucharist and the sufficiency of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The Holy Mass, as regarded by

¹⁹⁴ St. Thomas says: “Christ instituted this sacrament under the species of bread and wine, as is evident from Matthew 26. Consequently, bread and wine are the proper matter of this sacrament. And the reasonableness of this is seen first, in the use of this sacrament, which is eating:...bread and wine, wherewith men are commonly fed, are employed in this sacrament for the use of spiritual eating. Secondly, in relation to Christ’s Passion, in which the blood was separated from the body...the bread is received apart as the sacrament of the body, and the wine as the sacrament of the blood... this sacrament ‘avails for the defense of soul and body’; and therefore ‘Christ’s body is offered’ under the species of bread ‘for the health of the body, and the blood’ under the species of wine ‘for the health of the soul...’” (*ST*, III, q. 74, a.1).

¹⁹⁵ “This sacrament differs from the other sacraments in two respects. First, it is accomplished by the consecration of the matter, while the rest are perfected in the use of the consecrated matter. Secondly, because in the other sacraments the consecration of the matter consists only in a blessing...But in this sacrament the consecration of the matter consists in the miraculous change of the substance, which can only be done by God. The form of this sacrament differs from the forms of the other sacraments in two respects. First, the form of the other sacraments implies the use of the matter but the form of this sacrament implies merely the consecration of the matter, which consists in transubstantiation, as when it is said, ‘This is My body,’ or, ‘This is the chalice of My blood.’ Secondly, the forms of the other sacraments are pronounced in the person of the minister. But the form of this sacrament is pronounced as if Christ were speaking in person, so that it is given to be understood that the minister does nothing in perfecting this sacrament, except to pronounce the words of Christ” (*Ibid.*, III, q. 78, a.1).

¹⁹⁶ Baum, *Teaching of Cardinal Cajetan*, 46.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 48. See also Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 32.

¹⁹⁸ A.M. Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice* (Maryland: The Newman Press, 1953), 155.

¹⁹⁹ Baum, *Teaching of Cardinal Cajetan*, 47.

Protestants, is a “human invention which denies the unique and all-sufficient position of the Sacrifice of the Cross. A daily repetition of sacrifice made by human priests was in their eyes a denial of this uniqueness and sufficiency – a denial of the perfect Victimhood and Priesthood of Christ.”²⁰⁰

Concerning the objections brought about by reformers on the doctrine of the Eucharist as Sacrifice, Cajetan replies:²⁰¹

- a. There is one sacrifice, that of the Cross.
- b. The Mass does not repeat the sacrifice of the Cross but is a sacramental and representative offering of that sacrifice where the victim and the One who offers are the same, namely, Christ Himself.
- c. The succession of priests offering that sacrifice of the Mass takes nothing away from the one priesthood of Christ, since they act in his person as he, through them, continues to offer himself.
- d. The sacrifice of the Cross is all-sufficient. Its sacramental offering in the Mass is done to apply to us the effects of that sacrifice.
- e. The Mass therefore is unbloody sacrifice because in it the same Victim and same Priest who offers is present and his death is symbolically represented.

The Eucharist as sacrifice finds its rightful place in Calvary. How is the Eucharist related to the sacrifice of the Cross? The encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (EdE) says, “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*.”²⁰² “What is repeated”, says the same encyclical, “is its *memorial celebration*, its “commemorative representation” (*memoralis demonstratio*),²⁰³ which makes Christ’s one, definitive redemptive sacrifice always present in time.”²⁰⁴ Hence, the Eucharist is

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 46.

²⁰¹ O’Connor, *Hidden Manna*, 227, quoting Cajetan, *Sacrifice of the Mass and Its Rite-Against Lutherans*, Jared Wicks, 189ff.

²⁰² EdE, 12 quoting CCC, 1367.

²⁰³ Ibid., 17 quoting Pius XII’s *Mediator Dei*, (1947) 548.

²⁰⁴ EdE, 12. See also Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 44.

called a Sacramental Sacrifice because "Christ renews within the Mass the Sacrifice of the Cross."²⁰⁵ "There is no new sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharist."²⁰⁶

According to St. Thomas, inasmuch as the Eucharist commemorates the Lord's Passion, which was a true sacrifice, it is called a Sacrifice.²⁰⁷ The Angelic Doctor demonstrates that the Lord's Passion is, indeed, a true sacrifice. Defining sacrifice as "something done for that honor which is properly due to God, in order to appease Him,"²⁰⁸ and stating that Christ's voluntary offering of Himself for us out of love in His Passion was most acceptable to God, St. Thomas concludes that Christ's Passion is, indeed, a true sacrifice.²⁰⁹ The Eucharist is the sacramental renewal of the outmost love of God for man by the loving surrendering of Jesus' life to the Father. Our gaze, therefore, must not be fixed on the brutality of the Calvary. More important than the brutality is the loving surrendering of Himself from which we have life to the full.²¹⁰

The repetition of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is in the mode of offering: on the Cross the bloody immolation of Christ took place, whereas, in the Mass an unbloody manner under the species of bread and wine.²¹¹ It implies, therefore, that there is "no insufficiency on the part of the Sacrifice of the Cross, but rather the Mass exists by Christ's command precisely in order that the Sacrifice of Calvary may be commemorated and applied for the benefit of men."²¹²

Finally, the Council of Trent in 1562 declares: "If anyone says that in the Mass there is not offered to God a true and proper sacrifice or that to be offered means no more than Christ is given to us to eat, *anathema sit*."²¹³

²⁰⁵ E. Garcia, *Holy Eucharist*, 46.

²⁰⁶ William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 95.

²⁰⁷ See *ST*, III, q. 73, a.4 .

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, III, q 48, a. 3.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ See Moloney, *Problems in Theology*, 212.

²¹¹ See Baum, *Teaching of Cardinal Cajetan*, 46.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ O'Connor, *Hidden Manna*, 234.

In the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, the three religious values are embodied.²¹⁴ The first is the natural basis of worship which shows “continuity between the ritual instituted by Christ and those natural instincts of the human being of which sacrifice is the traditional mode of expression.”²¹⁵ The second value concerns the aspect of love and surrender in the Eucharist and its relevance in our daily living. Our life must be of love and surrender to God. “Love is the form of our freedom, and the language of sacrifice is the language of love.”²¹⁶ The third is that of the human freedom and the cooperation with God’s grace. It is in conforming our freedom to doing good out of love that man is free. Freedom is geared towards good.

Although sacrifice was a later attribution to the Eucharist, it is, however, “not something added to the thanksgiving, but a way of describing the meaning of the act of thanksgiving itself... Thanksgiving is made by offering sacrifice.”²¹⁷

The Eucharist as Thanksgiving

The Eucharist as Thanksgiving underlies the biblical concept of “blessing.” It is precisely called Eucharist, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “because it is an action of thanksgiving to God.”²¹⁸

Etymologically, *Eucharistia* comes from the Greek word *eu* which means “good,” and *charis* which means “grace.” Hence, literally, *eucharistia* means “good grace.” For St. Thomas it is called Eucharist, that is, “good grace, because “the grace of God is life everlasting” (Rom. 6:23); or it really contains Christ, Who is “full of grace.”²¹⁹ *Eucharistia* is also related to *eulogēin* which recalls “the Jewish blessings that proclaim – especially during a meal – God’s works: creation, redemption and sanctification.”²²⁰

²¹⁴ See Moloney, *Problems in Theology* 213 – 215.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 213.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

²¹⁷ Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*, 67.

²¹⁸ CCC, 1328.

²¹⁹ ST, III, q. 73, a.4.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1328. See also Edward J. Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, Robert J. Daly, ed. (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 363..

The root word *charis* refers to “a gift bestowed or to a thankful response made to the giver of gift.”²²¹ *Eucharistia*, therefore, is:

Thanksgiving for the gift: the recognition of its coming from the giver. It can also mean the response itself: the intentional giving back of the gift to the giver²²² not because *the community* has no need of the gift but to acknowledge that the gift remains the gift of God which the community stands in constant need...the gift is given back in order to be received anew form.²²³

Hence, Eucharist means, first of all, “thanksgiving.”²²⁴ The basis of which is that nothing could be offered to God that had not already been received as a gift.

Prefigurements of Eucharistia as Thanksgiving

The story of Cain and Abel, in the Old Testament, portrays a sacrifice of thanksgiving through burnt offering to God for the gifts of the earth. Cain offered crops, the fruit of the soil while Abel offered a fated calf in thanksgiving to God.²²⁵ Also, Melchizedek, King of Salem and, at the same time, priest of God Most High offered bread and wine in thanksgiving to God in view of the victory of Abram over his foes (see Gen. 14:18-20). Both offerings were done in thanksgiving to God. The Passover feast of the Jews is also a thanksgiving celebration for the marvelous redemption of God, freeing the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt. This momentous event is done by slaughtering lambs as Passover victims (See Ex. 12:1-28). It is to be noted that the kind of gifts that is offered in sacrifice is actually gifts necessary to support life. This implies, in some way, “the longing of the offerer to offer to God the life that had first been received.”²²⁶ “Gift-offering,” as we see, was essentially a sacrifice of thanksgiving.²²⁷

²²¹ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in West*, 363.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 364. Emphasis mine.

²²⁴ See Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*, 67. See also CCC, 1360.

²²⁵ See Howell, *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*, 116. See also Gen. 4: 3.

²²⁶ Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*, 65.

²²⁷ Ibid.

Eucharistia: Sacrifice of Praise

In the Eucharist, what we offer to the Father is “what he has given us: the gifts of creation, bread and wine, which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ,”²²⁸ But more than the gifts of the creation, the most precious gift we offer to God is His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ from and in whom we have salvation. By offering His life on the Cross, redemption and salvation come into reality.

Thus, “the Eucharist, the sacrament of our salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross, is also a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for the work of creation.”²²⁹ It is in the celebration of the Eucharist that the whole creation is presented to the Father through the death and resurrection of Christ. With Christ and through Christ, the Church in unison offers the sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for all that God has done: creation, redemption and sanctification.

The gift offering that we offer to God implies the desire to deepen and nourish our relationship with God as lovers do by giving gift, though in our case the gift is unique. Whatever we do in life is to be done in reference to God, the giver of life.

Eucharist as Holy Communion

The Eucharist is also called “Holy Communion.” It is rightly called as such for by this sacrament “we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body.”²³⁰ Benedict XVI revealed the secret to spiritual fruitfulness with these words: “the secret of spiritual fruitfulness is union with God, union that is realized especially in the Eucharist, also rightly called ‘Communion.’”²³¹ But more than this

²²⁸ CCC, 1357. See also Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 45, 47.

²²⁹ Ibid., 1359. See also Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 49.

²³⁰ CCC, 1331. See also 1 Cor. 10:16-17 and Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 77.

²³¹ Benedict XVI, “Secret of Spiritual Fruitfulness is Union with God,” in *L’osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, no. 20 (1944) – 17 May 2006, 1.

spiritual fruitfulness received by each communicant as a consequence of union with God, “communion is a sign of the Church.”²³²

The celebration of the Eucharist reaches its final stage with the expressed desire for union. That is why it is called Communion for “it expresses and confirms the common union between *the faithful and God*.”²³³ Without this expressed desire for union which is concretized in the reception of the Eucharistic species, the participation in the Eucharistic celebration is incomplete. “Full participation,” says *Sacramentum caritatis* (SaC), “in the Eucharist takes place when the faithful approach the altar in person to receive communion.”²³⁴ It is communion within and with the Church.

By itself, Holy Communion is a channel of grace, although it is a part of the Eucharistic celebration. In fact, according to Martimort, the grace of the Eucharist comes to us in two ways namely, from the offering of the Sacrifice itself and from the sacramental participation through communion.²³⁵ “Holy Communion is an intensifying of *the spiritual life received at baptism* since it brings us the very body of Christ to become the nourishment of our souls.”²³⁶

Eucharist as Sacred Banquet

Among other themes mentioned, this is the closest to the “nourishing” character of the Eucharist, which is the focal point of this study. Obviously,

²³² Aime Georges Martimort, *Signs of New Covenant* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1963), 203. See also *EdE*, 34; See also Cantalamesa, *Eucharist: Our Sanctification*, 31.

²³³ Howell, *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*, 120. Emphasis mine; See also Fidelis Stoeckl, *John Paul II and the Mystery of the Eucharist* (Pasay: Paulines Publishing House, 2006), 153.

²³⁴ SaC, 55. See also Synod of Bishops, Second General Assembly, Document on the Ministerial Priesthood, *Ultimis Temporibus* (UT), (30 November 1971): AAS 63 (1971), 898-942.

²³⁵ See Martimort, *Signs of the New Covenant*, 65; see also John Taylor, “Breaking of the Bread,” in *African Christian Studies*, vol. 13 (Kenya: CUEA Publications, 1997), 48.

²³⁶ Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice*, 182. Emphasis mine.

it is because the Eucharist which we celebrate everyday has its “foundation” from an action indispensable to life – a meal.

Human Meal

Needless to say, nourishment places imperious need of man for existence.²³⁷ Nourishment is the medicine for human experience of hunger. When one is hungry, he definitely searches for something to eat, to nourish himself. Food for him is his only assurance of energy, of life, of salvation. Without this nourishment he is doomed to die. The same is true with thirst. When someone is thirsty, one drinks some water to quench the urgent human need. Hence, we have favorite places in mind like “refectory” or “restaurant” where we habitually seek “restoration” of the energy spent.²³⁸

Nourishment, in its very nature, is coupled with life and death cycle. One has to give up so that others may live: when one nourishes himself, he actually deprives others to live. He eats an animal which has been killed. His very life is preferred over the life of an animal. Or his act of nourishing himself engenders the life of another being: the egg which is life in germ, or the milk which assures the growth of young animal.²³⁹

In the Eucharist, one nourishes himself not only with the life of the wheat and the grapes sacrificed for him, but also with the body of Christ given up for him and shed for him. Here lies the basic truth about the Eucharist: the source of energy and strength which nourishes man’s life is no longer the unconscious sacrifice of the bread and wine but the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus, who gives his life for man.²⁴⁰

Christ instituted the Eucharist not only under the sign of bread and wine but also under the sign of the meal: “An act of social life par excellence, in which is expressed human solidarity and closeness in the life

²³⁷ Philippe Rouillard, “From Human Meal to Christian Eucharist” in *Living Bread, Saving Cup*, R. Kevin Seasoltz, ed. (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 126.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

²⁴⁰ See *Ibid.*

of every day.”²⁴¹ The meal consists of eating together; it is normally taken in common: with a family, friends or a community. It, therefore, implies an idea of communion and sharing: “The meal taken in common seals belonging to a same group.”²⁴²

*Sacred Meal*²⁴³

Aside from their nutritive function, however, foods and drinks as a meal have symbolic value and religious significance: communion, sharing and belongingness. In fact, there were sacred meals in the Jewish religion. Covenant between the people and God is best expressed in sacrifice and meal.

In the book of Exodus, we read that the seventy two elders of Israel, who had gone up the mountain with Moses, contemplated God: “they beheld God, and they ate and drank” (Ex. 24:11).²⁴⁴ Sacred meals, inasmuch as they open access to the divine, gain much value. In the Old Testament, meal must be consumed at the place selected by God as narrated in Deuteronomy 12:5-7.²⁴⁵ What is surprising in this account is the fact that it is God who takes the first move, to reach man and to build friendship with him.

²⁴¹ *Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life: Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year 2000*, Robert R. Barr, trans. (Pasay: Paulines Publishing House, 1999), 102. See also Robert Fabing, *Real Food: A Spirituality of the Eucharist* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1994), 9, 15.

²⁴² Rouillard, “From Human Meal to Christian Eucharist,” 133. See also Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology* (Tacloban: Divine Word University Publications, 1975), 186. Fabing best describes the meaning of a meal: “A meal is meant to be taken with friends and the nourishment is meant to be more than physical. It is meant to be the food of human intimacy, and the result is to be love and joy” (Fabing, *Real Food*, 16).

²⁴³ Cyrille Vogel gives a descriptive definition of a sacred meal: “A sacred meal is one which, by the intermediary of ingested food and drink, brings those who participate in it into a relationship with the divinity; in the act of eating, the participants communicate with the divinity. Therefore, the sacred meal aspires theophagy, with a view to union the deity or to participation in the divine life (usually bliss in the after-life)” (Cyrille Vogel, “Symbols in Christian Worship: Food and Drink,” in Luis Maldonado and David Power, eds., *Symbol and Art in Worship* [New York: The Seabury Press, 1980], 70).

²⁴⁴ See *Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life*, 103.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

In the New Testament, meals were moments in which Jesus, during his public life, not only maintained amicable relations with his disciples but also sought to bring salvation to man.²⁴⁶

At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist to perpetuate the existing friendship between Him and His disciples and perpetually nourish them in his Church.²⁴⁷ He wished to leave His body and blood as food and drink so that through this sacred meal the fruit of His sacrifice might penetrate human life and transform it, leading it to its eschatological fulfillment.²⁴⁸ Likewise, “He wanted to give the Church food that would continually nourish it and have it live the same life as the Risen life”:²⁴⁹ “For he who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal” (Jn. 6:54).

The Eucharist is a *convivium*, a sacred banquet.²⁵⁰ To call a banquet a *convivium* is “to call it a “mystery of the sharing of life” – a mystery in which guests partake of the good things prepared and given to them by the love of their host, and in which the atmosphere of friendship and gratitude expands into a sharing of thoughts and sentiments and ends in common rejoicing.”²⁵¹ This is precisely what happens every time the Eucharist is celebrated. God is inviting us, as guests, and indeed, as friends, to partake of the good grace who is Christ himself given to us by the utmost love of God that we might have life - life to the full. Hence, rightly then, the Eucharist is “a banquet in which the faithful do not only enjoy, personally, the spiritual benefits and satisfactions of union with the Eucharistic Christ, but also become aware of their common participation in the divine life.”²⁵²

²⁴⁶ See *Ibid.* For wider biblical accounts of this point, see Rouillard, “Human Meal,” 1412-146. The author narrates the recorded meals by which Jesus creates friendly relationship with his disciples at the same time instructs them of the kingdom of God in their midst by way of teaching a lesson or two. See also Fabing, *Real Food*, 18-64.

²⁴⁷ See *Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life*, 102.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Stoeckl, *John Paul II and Mystery of Eucharist*, 201.

²⁵⁰ See Thomas Merton, *Living Bread* (New York: Farrar, Strans & Cudaby, 1956), 129. See also CCC, 1402 and *EdE*, 48.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 129.

This is far beyond the sacred meals in the Old Testament used to partake in the presence of God. In the Eucharist, it is the Flesh and Blood of Christ Who becomes food and drink for mankind: "My Flesh is real food and my Blood real drink" (Jn 6:55).²⁵³ Furthermore, as precept Christ admonishes: "If you do not eat the Flesh of the son of Man and drink his Blood, you have no life in you" (Jn. 6:53). Pope Urban IV beautifully enunciates how the Eucharist, as food, becomes a life-giving tree for us with these words:

Man fell by means of the food of the death-giving tree; man is raised up by means of the food of the life-giving tree. On the former hung the food of death, on the latter the nourishment of life. Eating of the former earned a wound; the taste of this latter restored health. Eating wounded us, and eating healed us.²⁵⁴

Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, gives hint that the bread and wine is the body and blood of the Lord when he exhorts Corinthians to examine themselves and recognize the body of the Lord before eating the bread and drinking the cup (see 1 Cor.11:17-34).²⁵⁵ Since this food is no ordinary bread but the Flesh of Christ, Paul warns him who partakes it to "investigate his own conscience for purity of heart."²⁵⁶

Eschatological Banquet

Another identification of the Eucharist is that it is called "Eschatological Banquet." In the recently published encyclical *Sacramentum caritatis* (SaC) we read: "the Eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the

²⁵³ Stoeckl, *John Paul II and Mystery of Eucharist*, 201. "We know real food from junk food by the strength it gives us, from the intensity and vigor we feel, from the vitality and animation it gives us. Real food nourishes us. It provides verve and deep stamina"(Fabing, *Real Food*, 117); see also Ibid., 87, 99.

²⁵⁴ O'Connor, *Hidden Manna*, 297.

²⁵⁵ See Robert A. Sungen, *Not by Bread Alone: Biblical and Historical Evidence for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Catholic Mass* (USA: Queenship Publishing Company, 2000), 154 -155.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 155.

final banquet foretold by the prophets (See Is.25:6-9) and described in the New Testament as “the marriage-feast of the Lamb,”(Rev. 19:7-9) to be celebrated in the joy of the “communion of saints.”²⁵⁷ It points to the heavenly banquet²⁵⁸ in the age to come. Synonymous with eschatological banquet is the identification of the Eucharist as the pledge of future glory - “a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us.”²⁵⁹

SaC explicitly exhorts that the Eucharist, the paschal banquet, in which we affirm that Christ has died and has risen and will come again, is “a pledge of the future glory in which our bodies too will be glorified.”²⁶⁰ The common participation in the divine life that is nourished in the Eucharist gives us the assurance of the future glory where like Christ, we, too, will be glorified. This is based on the truth that “the flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, is his body in its glorious state after the resurrection.”²⁶¹

While still on earth, however, “those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: *they already possess it on earth*, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality.”²⁶² Martimort also says that the Eucharist, even more than baptism, is the promise of resurrection and glory. The Body of Christ is given to us in view of eternity:²⁶³ “a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ (See Jn 15:11); it is in some way the anticipation of heaven, the “pledge of future glory.”²⁶⁴ The CCC says, “There is no surer pledge or clearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells,’ (2 Pt. 3:13) than the Eucharist.”²⁶⁵

²⁵⁷ *SaC*, 31. See also *EdE*, 18-20.

²⁵⁸ See Fabing, *Real Food*, 110.

²⁵⁹ *MF*, 4, quoting *SaC*, 47. See also *EdE*, 18 and *UT*, 15.

²⁶⁰ *SaC*, 32. See also CCC, 1402.

²⁶¹ *EdE*, 18.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ See Martimort, *Signs of New Covenant*, 61.

²⁶⁴ *EdE*, 18.

²⁶⁵ CCC, 1405. See also Emmanuel Kizhakkethalackal, “Eucharsit as the Source and Symbol of the Church in the Thought of Paul VI” in *Bible Bhashyam: An Indian Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 26,1-2 (India: Bible Bhashyam Trust, 2000), 119.

Nourishing Character of Eucharist

Etymology of "Nourishment"

"Nourishment" comes from a Middle English (ME) word, *norysshement* the meaning of which is related to "nutriment," *i.e.*, anything that nourishes, promotes growth, development or good health.²⁶⁶ In Latin derivatives, "nourishment" is related to *cibus*, which means "food."²⁶⁷ *Nutrimendum*, the Latin term for "nutriment," is synonymous to "food," and it comes from the verb *nutrire* which means to feed, foster, support, or maintain.²⁶⁸ Hence, nourishment means nutriments derived from foods that maintain, support, promote and foster growth or good health.

Just as ordinary foods give nourishment to our physical body, the Eucharist – the sacred food, maintains, supports, promotes, and fosters growth of man's spiritual life. There are quite a number of references found in the writings of the Fathers of the Church referring to the Eucharist as spiritual foods.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ See "nourishment" at <http://www.yourdictionary.com/nourishment>.

²⁶⁷ See "nourishment," in *Collins Gem Latin Dictionary*, 1998 ed., s.v. "Nourishment"

²⁶⁸ See *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, 1995 ed., s.v. "Nourishment."

²⁶⁹ Here are some writings of the Fathers regarding Eucharist as spiritual nourishment: "'Eat My Flesh,' He says, 'and drink My Blood' (See Jn 6:55). The Lord supplies us with these intimate nutriments. He delivers over His Flesh, and pours out His Blood; and nothing is lacking for the growth of His children" (St. Clement of Alexandria, "Instructor of Children," 1,6,41,3 in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 1, 408); "You, almighty Master, have created all things for your name's sake, and have given food and drink to men for their enjoyment, so that they might return thanks to you. Upon us, however, you have bestowed spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through your Servant...." (*Didache*, 10, 1, in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 1, 7); "To drink the Blood of Jesus is to share in His immortality. The strength of the Word is the Spirit, just as the blood is the strength of the body. Similarly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man. The one, the Watered Wine, nourishes in faith, while the other, the Spirit leads us on to immortality. The union of both, however, – of the drink and of the Word, – is called Eucharist, a praiseworthy and excellent gift. Those who partake of it in faith are sanctified in body and in soul...." (St. Clement of Alexandria, "Instructor of Children," 2, 2, 19, 4 in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 1, 410). "But the Bread which is holy, that Bread is supersubstantial, as if to say, directed toward the substance of the soul. This Bread does not go into the belly, to be cast out into privy. Rather, it is distributed through your whole system, for the benefit of body and soul...." (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "Mystagogic," 5, 15 in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 1, 853e).

Effects of Eucharistic Nourishment

“In the first place,” says Baum, “the Mass achieves its ends *ex opere operato* (by the very fact of the actions being performed)²⁷⁰ because it is the action of Christ the Eternal High Priest Who offers the sacrifice in infinite value.”²⁷¹ In the Eucharist and indeed, in the other sacraments, the efficacy does not depend on the personal holiness (or lack of it) of the minister performing the sacrament but upon the sacrament itself which is the action of Christ. The minister acts only *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ). Since in the Eucharistic sacrifice the victim is no other than Christ himself – “an infinitely valuable victim,”²⁷² then, it is of infinite value. *Ex parte Christi* (“from the part of Christ”), therefore, “the fruits of the Mass are both infinite and infallible.”²⁷³

“It is true,” says Crofts “that the effects of Holy Communion come directly from Christ Himself....But the working of the Sacrament is not an automatic thing.”²⁷⁴ As applied to men, the fruits of the Mass are infinite but they are proportioned in their distribution to the devotion of the men who take part of it.²⁷⁵ This devotion consists “in a dedicated attitude of mind oriented to the active service of the gospel of Jesus Christ impelled by love.”²⁷⁶ It undoubtedly gives some grace to every soul, but the soul must be in the state of grace to receive it worthily; and, therefore capable of receiving an increase of life.²⁷⁷ Aside from the prerequisite that the person must be in

²⁷⁰ *Ex opere operato* (by the very fact of the action's being performed). It follows that “the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God” (*ST*, III, q.68, a.8). From the moment that the sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them (*CCC*, 1128).

²⁷¹ Baum, *Teaching of Cardinal Cajetan*, 52.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ See Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice*, 196.

²⁷⁵ Baum, *Teaching of Cardinal Cajetan*, 53.

²⁷⁶ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in West*, 371.

²⁷⁷ Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice*, 196.

the state of grace²⁷⁸ in receiving Christ in the Eucharist, a spirit of constant conversion and active participation in the Eucharistic celebration must also be in mind: "Active participation in the Eucharistic liturgy can hardly be expected if one approaches it superficially, without an examination of his or her life... *for only a heart reconciled to God makes genuine participation possible.*"²⁷⁹

Indeed, everyone who participates in the Eucharistic celebration receives the grace which the Eucharist imparts. "The way it bears fruit," however, "will depend on the disposition of those for whom the graces are intended."²⁸⁰

Generally, as outlined in the CCC, there are five effects which flow from the Eucharistic nourishment, namely: intimate union with Christ, renewal of the life of grace, separation from sin, church formation and commitment to the least, the last and the lost.²⁸¹

Intimate Union with Christ: Spiritual Nourishment

The chief fruit of the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ is an intimate union with Christ.²⁸² The believer who receives Christ in the Eucharist becomes "concorporeal and consanguineous with Christ" and is transformed "into a bearer of Christ" and "sharer in his divine nature".²⁸³ Similarly, Thomas Merton commented that "true, the species of bread

²⁷⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas says: "Now whoever is conscious of mortal sin, has within him an obstacle to receiving the effect of this sacrament; since he is not a proper recipient of this sacrament, both because he is not alive spiritually, and so he ought not to eat the spiritual nourishment, since nourishment is confined to the living; and because he cannot be united with Christ, which is the effect of this sacrament, as long as he retains an attachment towards mortal sin" (*ST*, III, q. 79, a. 3).

²⁷⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission* (SaC) (Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2007), 55. Emphasis mine.

²⁸⁰ O'Connor, *Hidden Manna: A Theology of Eucharist*, 307.

²⁸¹ See CCC, 1391-1397.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 1391.

²⁸³ Nello Cipriani, "The Holy Eucharist in the Fathers of the Church: Reflections on the Holy Father's Encyclical Letter 'Ecclesia de Eucharistia'," in *L'osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, no.32 (1805) – 6 August 2003, 6.

dissolve within us, but the substance of the Logos becomes the nourishment of our souls in such a way that we live no longer by our own life but by His.”²⁸⁴

For St. Thomas Aquinas, the Eucharist is, in fact, instituted for this purpose, *i.e.*, for spiritual nourishment:

Through the power of the sacrament it produces directly that effect for which it was instituted. Now it was instituted not for satisfaction, but for nourishing spiritually through union between Christ and His members, as nourishment is united with the person nourished.²⁸⁵

Consequently, intimate union with Christ in the Eucharist which is the “perfect union with Christ”²⁸⁶ leads to transformation: “I shall not be changed into thee, but thou shalt be changed into me.”²⁸⁷ The reason precisely, why Jesus comes to us in this divine mystery is this: “To divinize us and transform us entirely into Himself.”²⁸⁸ The Eucharist “increases and perfects our spiritual life itself, in order that we may be perfected in our own being, our own personality, by *our union with God: per hoc sacramentum augetur gratia et perficitur spiritalis vita ad hoc quod homo in seipso perfectus existat per conjunctionem ad Deum.*”²⁸⁹

As to the relation of the Eucharist with Baptism and Confirmation, Crofts says:

Baptism is the gateway, the birth of the soul in the likeness of Christ through water and the Holy Ghost. Confirmation further seals that pact with God of the Christian soul, giving it strength against the external enemies who war on that soul. But the mainstay of the Christian’s interior life of grace, and

²⁸⁴ Merton, *Living Bread*, 114.

²⁸⁵ *ST*, III, q. 79, a.5.

²⁸⁶ See Garcia, *Holy Eucharist*, 105.

²⁸⁷ Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice*, 192. See also Stoeckl, *John Paul II and Mystery of Eucharist*, 81-82.

²⁸⁸ Merton, *Living Bread*, 112.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 119, quoting *ST*, III, q. 79, a.1, ad. 1.

the secret of his spiritual growth and development, come from the sacrament which more than any other unites his body and soul in God though the Eucharistic presence of Jesus on the Altar.²⁹⁰

The Eucharist is “an *intensification of the grace received at Baptism* since it brings us the very body of Christ to become the nourishment of our souls.”²⁹¹ The reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion makes us “sharers in the divine life in an ever more adult and conscious way”.²⁹² “I am the food of grown men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you change me, like the food of your flesh, into yourself, but you shall be changed into me.”²⁹³

The most precious fruits that flow from an intimate, quasi-physical union with the Word made Flesh are the joy and purity of heart.²⁹⁴ Union with Christ implies also union with “all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own.”²⁹⁵

Renewal of the Life of Grace

The supernatural life that we share with Christ is called “grace.”²⁹⁶ This supernatural life is but a privilege – “the gratuitous gift that God makes us to his own life”²⁹⁷ – for we are but human. This participation in the life of grace is received at Baptism. There involves a change of level in the acquisition of the life of grace, *i.e.*, from merely human to divine life.²⁹⁸ By

²⁹⁰ Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice*, 215.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 182. Emphasis mine.

²⁹² *SaC*, 70.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ See Merton, *Living Bread*, 113.

²⁹⁵ *SaC*, 89, quoting *DCE*, 14.

²⁹⁶ See *CCC*, 1997. See also Howell, *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*, 38.

²⁹⁷ *CCC*, 1999. See also *Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life*, 20.

²⁹⁸ See Howell, *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*, 35.

receiving the sacrament of baptism, we cling to Christ like “branches of a vine, or members of a body.”²⁹⁹

The Eucharist renews the life of grace received at Baptism.³⁰⁰ It does not only renew but further strengthen the intensity of grace received at Baptism. Thomas Merton puts it this way: “The Eucharist brings us spiritual nourishment, promotes our spiritual growth, refreshes and heals our souls, repairing their losses, and finally it brings spiritual delight.”³⁰¹ In his writings, St. Thomas distinguishes the effects of the Eucharist from what it is contained and from the way in which it is given. From what this sacrament contains, St Thomas writes:

First of all and principally, from what is contained in this sacrament, which is Christ; Who, just as by coming into the world, He visibly bestowed the life of grace upon the world, according to John 1:17: “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” so also, by coming sacramentally into man causes the life of grace, according to John 6:58: “He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.”³⁰²

From the way it is given, by way of food and drink, the Angelic Doctor further adds:

The effect of this sacrament is considered from the way in which this sacrament is given; for it is given by way of food and drink. And therefore this sacrament does for the spiritual life all that material food does for the bodily life, namely, by sustaining, giving increase, restoring, and giving delight. Accordingly, Ambrose says (*De Sacramentis* v): “This is the bread of everlasting life, which supports the substance of our soul.”³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 38.

³⁰⁰ See CCC, 1392.

³⁰¹ Merton, *Living Bread*, 116. See also *Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life*, 21.

³⁰² ST, III, q 79. a. 1.

³⁰³ Ibid.

Since Christ himself is contained and is received in this sacrament, every person who receives him in this sacrament receives the life of grace and lives in Him. Just as the ordinary bread sustains, increases, repairs and delights the body, so does the heavenly bread for the soul.³⁰⁴

Separation from Sin: Medicinal Character

Insofar as the Eucharist is the memorial of the Lord's Passion which is "the fount and cause of the forgiveness of sins,"³⁰⁵ it effects forgiveness of sins: "This is My blood . . . which shall be shed. It is the Blood of Christ, as singled out, that which forgives sins: "the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.""³⁰⁶ Furthermore, "by means of the Mystery of the Eucharist," as Paul VI says, "the Sacrifice of the Cross which was once carried out on Calvary is re-enacted in wonderful fashion and is constantly recalled and its salvific power is applied to the forgiving of the sins we commit each day."³⁰⁷ Therefore, "the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from the past sins and preserving us from future sins."³⁰⁸

Sins, according to their gravity, are classified into two, namely, venial and mortal. What kind of sin, therefore, is forgiven by the reception of the Eucharist? CCC explicitly states that "as bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity wipes away venial sins."³⁰⁹ Only those sins considered venial are forgiven by the reception of the Eucharist. As to the case of mortal sins, the Eucharist is "not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins – that is proper to the sacrament of Reconciliation. The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with

³⁰⁴ See Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice*, 192.

³⁰⁵ *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 3.

³⁰⁶ CCC, 1393.

³⁰⁷ Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei: Encyclical Letter on Doctrine and Worship of the Holy Eucharist* (MF), (Philippines : Paulines Publishing House, 1965 (AAS 57 [1965], 753-774), 27.

³⁰⁸ CCC, 1393.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1394.

the Church.”³¹⁰ Since one who commits mortal sin is spiritually dead – “sin is the spiritual death of the soul”³¹¹ – and therefore, not in full communion with the Church, he cannot receive Christ in the Holy Communion.³¹² This is how St. Thomas reasons out with regards this particular issue:

Whoever is conscious of mortal sin, has within him an obstacle to receiving the effect of this sacrament; since he is not a proper recipient of this sacrament, both because he is not alive spiritually, and so he ought not to eat the spiritual nourishment, since nourishment is confined to the living; and because he cannot be united with Christ, which is the effect of this sacrament, as long as he retains an attachment towards mortal sin.”³¹³

The Eucharist, however, can preserve us from committing mortal sins: “by the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins. The more we share the life of Christ and progress

³¹⁰ Ibid., 1395. To further qualify the close link between the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Pope John Paul II during the general audience in St. Peter’s square on Wednesday 18 April writes: “the Council of Trent speaks of the Eucharist as an ‘antidote by means of which we are freed from daily faults and preserved from mortal sins’ (Decree De SS. Eucharistia, ch. 2. DS, 1638; See 1740). Indeed, the same Council of Trent speaks of the Eucharist as a sacrament which procures the remission of grave sins, but by means of the grace and gift of penitence (See Decree De SS. Missae Sacrificio, ch. 2. DS, 1743), which is directed to and includes, at least in intention—‘*in voto*’—sacramental confession. The Eucharist as Sacrifice, is not a substitute for nor parallel to the Sacrament of Penance: it is rather the origin from which derive, and the end to which are directed all the other sacraments, and in particular Reconciliation; ‘it remits even grave crimes and sins’ (Ibid.) especially because it requires and demands sacramental confession”(http://www.miraclerosarymission.org/ga84apr24.html. See also *L’osservatore Romano*, April 24, 1983). Furthermore, “The Eucharist and Penance thus become in a sense two closely connected dimensions of authentic life in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel, of truly Christian life. The Christ who calls to the Eucharistic banquet is always the same Christ who exhorts us to penance and repeats his ‘Repent’. Without this constant, ever renewed endeavor for conversion, partaking of the Eucharist would lack its full redeeming effectiveness and there would be a loss or at least a weakening of the special readiness to offer God the spiritual sacrifice in which our sharing in the priesthood of Christ is expressed in an essential and universal manner”(Ibid.).

³¹¹ ST, III, q. 79, a. 6.

³¹² See CCC, 1395.

³¹³ ST, III, q. 79, a. 3.

in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin.”³¹⁴

This recalls what St. Thomas in his Eucharistic theology refers to as the “medicinal character” of the Eucharist against future sin. Normally, there are two ways by which man can defend and preserve his body.³¹⁵ First, he can preserve his body inwardly, from inner decay by means of food and medicine. Second, he can protect his body outwardly from outward assaults by means of arms. Indeed, the Eucharist preserves man from sin in both ways. First, man’s spiritual life is strengthened by uniting himself with Christ through grace in the Eucharist as spiritual food and spiritual medicine. Secondly, the Eucharist is a sign of Christ’s Passion whereby the devils are conquered, thus protecting him from all the assault of demons.³¹⁶

Also, Thomas More affirms the medicinal aspect of the Eucharist in these words: “This Sacrament as a remedy and antidote for sin, *delivers* as from the faults of human frailty which beset us every day and *preserves* us from falling into mortal sin.”³¹⁷

St. Thomas also says something about the forgiveness of the punishment due to sin. He writes:

Because this union (*the union of Christ and His members*) is the effect of charity, from the fervor of which man obtains forgiveness, not only of guilt but also of punishment, hence it is that as a consequence, and by concomitance with the chief effect, man obtains forgiveness of the punishment, not indeed of the entire punishment, but according to the measure of his devotion and fervor....But in so far as it is a sacrifice, it has a satisfactory power. Yet in satisfaction, the affection of the offerer is weighed rather than the quantity of the offering...although this offering suffices of its own quantity to satisfy for all punishment, yet it becomes

³¹⁴ CCC, 1395.

³¹⁵ See *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 6.

³¹⁶ See *Ibid*.

³¹⁷ Merton, *Living Bread*, 116. Emphasis mine.

satisfactory for them for whom it is offered, or even for the offerers, according to the measure of their devotion, and not for the whole punishment.”³¹⁸

Clearly, although the sacrament itself warrants and effects the forgiveness of punishment due to sin, the personal disposition – the gravity of one’s devotion and fervor – on this sacrament is the measure with which one is forgiven. The degree, therefore, of our love of this sacrament counts most in the remission of the punishment due to sin committed by us, and of by those whom we pray for.

Church Formation: Bread and Wine, Symbol of the Church

The building up of the community of believers into union with its head is the ultimate gift of the Eucharist.³¹⁹ Just as the Eucharist creates the Church, it is to the Church that Christ, “bequeathed the Eucharist as a symbol . . . of the unity and charity with which He wished all Christians to be joined among themselves, hence as a symbol of that one Body of which He is the Head.”³²⁰ From this truth – that the Eucharist creates the Church, and that Christ bequeathed the Eucharist to His Church, the way by which we acquire a share in the divine life is “not by direct, individual, and personal donation to each of us by God, but by becoming part of this pre-existing and divinely-living organism, *the Church*.”³²¹ This is first realized in Baptism.

In the Eucharist, the life of grace received in baptism is renewed, strengthened and deepened.³²² The reason why He comes to us daily in the sacrament of the Eucharist is that we may remain united with him: “He comes first of all to unite us to Himself as members to their Head, in one

³¹⁸ *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 5. Emphasis mine.

³¹⁹ See Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*, 94. See also *EdE*, 43; *LG*, 11; and Stoeckl, *John Paul II and Mystery of Eucharist*, 81, 134.

³²⁰ *MF*, 40. See also Kizhakkethalackal, “Eucharist as the Source and Symbol of the Church in the Thought of Paul VI,” 115.

³²¹ Howell, *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*, 36. Emphasis mine.

³²² See *CCC*, 1396.

Mystical Body.”³²³ The desire of Christ and indeed, of the Church, “to see all the faithful approach the sacred banquet each and every day is based on a wish to have them all united to God through the Sacrament.”³²⁴ The concrete sign of the unity of the faithful in Christ is “the unity of Christ’s own Body made present at every time and every place in which species are consecrated and received in communion.”³²⁵ “For every time Eucharist is celebrated, the unity of the faithful, who form one body in Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 10:17), is both expressed and brought about”.³²⁶

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”³²⁷

St. Thomas explicitly cites that one of the effects of the Eucharist is unity among the believers considering that the species under which it is given is made up of many grains as in the case of bread and many grapes as in wine and yet one, one bread and wine.³²⁸

For the first moment in time, the apostles entered into sacramental communion with Christ in the Upper Room. From that time on, the Church is continually built up through the sacramental communion with Christ in the Eucharist.³²⁹ “The Eucharist, which prolongs the Incarnation among us, is the sign and cause of the Mystical Body which Christ has taken to Himself.”³³⁰ The beauty of this reality - One Church nourished by the Eucharist, is this:

Although we may be praying alone in a small, dark, empty church, praying with difficulty, dry and distracted, we are in

³²³ Merton, *Living Bread*, 110.

³²⁴ *MF*, 66.

³²⁵ Merton, *Living Bread*, 135.

³²⁶ *EdE*, 21 quoting *LG*, 3.

³²⁷ *CCC*, 1396 quoting *1 Cor* 10:16-17.

³²⁸ See *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 1.

³²⁹ *EdE*, 21.

³³⁰ Merton, *Living Bread*, 133.

fact not only united by love to Christ in His Passion, not only prostrate in adoration before Christ in glory, but we are one body with all those who are praying in different places and at different times.”³³¹

Hence the matter of bread and wine is a symbol of the Church. *Mysterium fidei* puts it this way:

When the Lord calls the bread that has been made from many grains of wheat His Body, He is describing our people whose unity He has sustained; and when He refers to wine pressed from many grapes and berries as His Blood, once again He is speaking of our flock which has been formed by fusing many into one.”³³²

The composition of the bread itself, made from many grains and of the wine, pressed from many grapes speaks of the people who form one flock – the Church sustained by Eucharist.³³³

For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The Body of Christ – not many bodies but one body. For as bread is completely one, though made of up many grains of wheat, and these, albeit unseen, remain nonetheless present, in such a way that their difference is not apparent since they have been made a perfect whole, so too are we mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ.³³⁴

Now, the partaking of “the one bread,” says St. Paul, “makes us one body, though we are many in number; the same bread is shared by all”(1 Cor 10.17). From the teaching of the twelve apostles, we read, “Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together

³³¹ Ibid., 17.

³³² MF, 42.

³³³ See ST, III, q. 74, a. 1.

³³⁴ EdE, 23.

and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom”³³⁵

Commitment to Least, Last and Lost: Bread of Poor

“The measure of our fruitful reception of the Eucharistic Lord,” says O’Connor, “is charity in thought, word, and deed.”³³⁶ Yes, it is true that the message of love which we draw from the Eucharist can be expressed in words, but “the expression may be more emphatic, more forceful and complete, if it be by action.”³³⁷ On the contrary, a “participation in the Eucharist,” says O’Connor, “that fails to stimulate a ‘social consciousness’ is a defective participation.”³³⁸ St. John Chrysostom stresses out this social consciousness in his homily saying:

You have tasted the blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother...You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to part in this meal....God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful.³³⁹

Fruitful participation in the Eucharist 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.”³⁴⁰ In the Eucharist, the faithful partake the One bread which is “a constant reminder that the duty of every person, the urgent duty of the Christian, is to consider what is superfluous to them according to the measure of others’ needs.”³⁴¹ The challenge goes to every faithful “to be mindful of the situations of extreme poverty in which a great part of humanity still lives:

³³⁵ Benedict XVI, “God’s life comes to us in the Eucharist,” in *L’osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, no. 25 (1949) – 21 June 2006, 8, quoting *Didache*, IX, 4.

³³⁶ O’Connor, *Hidden Manna*, 338.

³³⁷ Howell, *Sacraments and Sacrifice*, 117.

³³⁸ O’Connor, *Hidden Manna*, 339.

³³⁹ CCC, 1397. See also Mt. 25:40.

³⁴⁰ *SaC*, 64.

³⁴¹ O’Connor, *Hidden Manna*, 339 quoting *GS*, 10.

these are situations for which human beings bear a clear and disquieting responsibility.”³⁴² In fact, “the consecrated Host, the most simple type of bread and nourishment,” says Benedict XVI “made only of a little flour and water...appears as the food of the poor, those to whom the Lord made himself closest in the first place.”³⁴³ The simplicity of the bread, which Benedict referred to as the food of the poor, is a constant reminder for all who partake the One Bread, the body of Christ, to be committed to the least, the last and the lost. This commitment is prompted with urgency for “whatever good we do to one of His least brethren we do to Christ Himself (Cf. Mt 25.40).”³⁴⁴ Thomas Merton blatantly reinforces this commitment to the least, the last and the lost with these words:

Do you wish to honor the Body of Christ? Then do not disdain Him when you see Him in rags. After having honored Him in Church with silken vestments do not leave Him to die of cold outside for lack of clothing. For it is the same Jesus “This is my Body” and Who says “You saw me hungry and did not give me something to eat – What you have refused to the least of these little ones, you have refused it to me.”³⁴⁵

Lastly, “the great fruit of the Mass must be in fraternal charity, without which there is but a mockery of the true religion.”³⁴⁶

Divinization, as man’s ultimate calling, is essentially *union of man with God by grace*.

Man’s participation in the divine life both in sacramental and moral dimensions of life necessitates *union of both*, i.e., no dichotomy, no compartmentalization of faith and way of living. Otherwise, it is a fragmented participation, not union in the strict sense, for *union* means *one*, not divided.

³⁴² *SaC*, 90.

³⁴³ Benedict XVI, “God’s life comes to us in the Eucharist,” in *L’osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, no. 25 (1949) – 21 June 2006, 6-7.

³⁴⁴ *MF*, 35.

³⁴⁵ Merton, *Living Bread*, 136.

³⁴⁶ Crofts, *Fullness of Sacrifice*, 230.

The theology of the Eucharist speaks of union of man and God in the Eucharistic themes of sacrifice, thanksgiving, communion and banquet. Among the Eucharistic themes, the Eucharist as a sacred banquet closest to the concept of nourishment for it is taken as food and drink. The partaking of the bread which is the Body of Christ and the wine which is the Blood of Christ signifies *union with God* par excellence, for in the Eucharist, Christ is not only signified but contained.

Furthermore, the Eucharist as a sacred Banquet *unites man intimately with God* and nourishes man towards the final stage of divinization. The Eucharist also points to the eschatological banquet, the pledge of future glory which is *union with God in glory*.

Hence, the Eucharist sustains, strengthens, and ultimately, leads the pilgrim faithful to the heavenly banquet in the age to come which is *union with God in glory*. But this union of the faithful with God in the Eucharist implies union with our neighbor which is best expressed in love. Otherwise, such a participation in the Eucharist is superficial, fragmented and thus, it is not union in the strict sense, for *union* means *one*, not divided.

Eucharistic nourishment therefore signifies communion, a life shared in common, which in faith is performative by means of prayer and good works. □