

The Eucharist : Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow – A Reformation Perspective

Firstly, I'd like to thank the organisers of the Conference for the kind invitation to speak at this event. It is an honour. I am grateful also for all they have done in preparation, including giving me a theme. It's great when you get a theme because you think to yourself: that'll save me weeks trying to come up with a topic. But then, of course, you discover that trying to decipher what the theme might mean actually takes you months!

Deciphering the Topic. I've been asked to speak on the Eucharist. That bit is fine. But it's that little "A Reformation perspective" tagged on at the end of the title that got me stumped for quite a while. Normally, we think of Reformation as a sixteenth century phenomenon. Was I to talk about that? Recent scholarship, however, underscores how in the sixteenth century saw a plurality of Reformations that interacted with each other: Lutheran, Catholic, Reformed and radical movements. Any analysis of any of these "reformations" would have to take account of their historical, political, social and economic contexts and influences. Just think of the masterly work of Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* and we can appreciate how issues at the time of "the Reformation" aren't altogether as straightforward as we think. Furthermore, Carter Linberg points out that "if we lose sight of the Reformations' complex network of historical relationships we may oversimplify our conception and evaluation of Reformation theology itself".¹ Compounding the problem is the fact that interpretations of the Reformations of the sixteenth century are so legion that there are numerous large studies of the history of these interpretations.² I certainly couldn't attempt to do justice to that in a short paper delivered here this morning. You'll be glad to hear I won't even try.

In thinking further about the topic it became clear that Reformation is a theme that cannot simply be linked to the sixteenth century. Straightaway it could be extended to include an involved series of changes in Western Christendom between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. But even that timeframe is not sufficient. As the Second Vatican Council puts it, the Church is always in reformation. In its document on the restoration of Christian unity, Vatican II makes its own the cry *ecclesia semper reformanda* when it says: "Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of men and women here on earth."³

It's at this point I found my way into the theme I've been asked to address. I want to propose firstly, that from the beginning of the Church the dynamic of reformation and Eucharist go together. As Pope Benedict wrote recently, "Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord's eucharistic presence among his people."⁴ Secondly, in the Reformation launched by Martin Luther he too drew attention to "belief" in the Lord's eucharistic presence, underlining personal faith at the heart of Reformation. Thirdly, today, many ecclesial strands of belief in the Eucharist are encountering one another in a new and exciting manner, paving the way

¹ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 9

² *Ibid.*, 13.

³ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6.

⁴ Apostolic Letter, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 6.

for a re-reception of this central mystery in the life of the Church that tomorrow we hope we will also share in fully. Fourthly, I'll propose that we are in an intermediate phase which calls us to a dialogue of life that will open us increasingly to "the hour of the one chalice" as Patriarch Athenagoras used to put it.

The Eucharist - Central to reformation in the life of the Church

From the beginning the Eucharist has mattered much precisely because here is the heartbeat, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, of the realisation of the dream of a new world, a new humanity, a new creation that Christians believe can come about because of Christ. In the Eucharist the community *remembers* the paschal event of Christ in order to shape its life *now* in conformity with it and so be a witness and instrument of the paschal event among humanity on its way towards eschatological *fulfilment*. Coming from the heart of God, the Eucharist was viewed by the earliest Christian writers as bringing about our *being-in* Christ, and through Christ in the bosom of the Father, with the consequence of our *being with* our brothers and sisters. This "being-with", however is not just living side-by-side, but also a *being in one another* through Christ. This was the great reformation of humanity that Christ brought about in this world – to be in Christ, to be with one another, and to be in one another. It is the Eucharist that perpetuates this miracle from age to age.

Time and again, it is drawing upon this sacrament of love that new inspiration for reform has come. We read in the Acts of the Apostles how the first Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...." with the immediate effect that "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:42-45). Martin Luther referred specifically to this text in his underlining of the relationship between the mass and social ethics.⁵

Paul and the Body of Christ. The Church always finds itself, as if by instinct, wanting to return anew to this originating source of its life and mission. St. Paul, for instance, wants to bring us right back to that original gift:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Cor 11:23-26)

Through the Lord's death the Church as a new Subject in history had come to life. Paul calls it the Body of Christ. In 1 Cor 10, he introduces the image of the Church as the Body of Christ deriving it from the Eucharistic experience of the community of disciples:

⁵ See LW, 35: 53-7.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1Cor 10, 16-17).

Paul understood the radicality of what the Eucharist achieves. In ancient times, Menenius Agrippa, a Roman apologist, speaking to the people of Rome, compared the functioning of society, divided into classes, with a human body. He thereby sanctioned their inequality in view of the organic nature of the whole society. Paul takes a completely different view. It is because we share in the Eucharistic Bread, the one Body of Christ that we become one Body with him, indeed his very Body. For Paul this identification of the Body with Christ is real: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Cor 12:12).

If we are one body in Christ, then, as Paul puts it, "we are members one of another" (Rom 12:5). And this explains too the commandment that summarises, as Jesus tells us, the law and the prophets: "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 19:18-19). Thanks to the Eucharist, in Christ, the other, the neighbour becomes really another me: because all of us really through the Eucharist are one in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal 3:28). Having received in the Eucharist the fire of the Spirit of Christ, we are called to walk according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4), loving one another "with mutual affection; outdoing one another in showing honour" (Rom 12, 10).

All of this is in mind when Paul says that the Church, through the Eucharist, is the Body of Christ. He is affirming that the ecclesial community, through the Eucharist, constitutes for the world the "tangible" presence of the very person of the Risen Christ reforming, renewing and bringing about a new humanity. In other words, it is the way with which Christ is present in history. E. Käsemann has written:

Just as the human body is the necessary reality of existential communication, so the Church appears as the possibility and reality of communion between the Risen Christ and our world; in this sense, it is called his body. It is the ambit in which and through which Christ, after being exalted, demonstrates on earth he is "kyrios" (Lord). The Church is the Body of Christ, being the actual field of his dominion in which, through the word, the sacrament and mission of Christians, he deals with the world and receives in it obedience already before the Parousia.⁶

Since the ecclesial community, through the Eucharist, is identified with Christ in his giving of Self for humanity ("this is my body given up for you and for all") the community is by nature and by vocation a body-given-to-humanity. The Eucharist provides the ground plan for the Church's self-understanding and mission.

Lessons from History. It is no surprise, therefore, that through the centuries, the immense depth of the Eucharist has been explored and re-proposed, especially at times of renewal in the Church. We think of Ignatius of Antioch who at a period of persecution writes on the Eucharist as a real power of resurrection, the medicine of immortality. For Anthony, founder of monasticism, the first major wave of reformation in the Church, his whole experience began with the Gospel proclaimed at the Eucharist. Francis of

⁶ E. Käsemann, *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen : J.C.B. Mohr, 1972²).

Assisi who wanted to re-propose nothing but the Gospel, living the Gospel, as the way to renewal in a Church that had grown too bourgeois saw in the Eucharist the supreme gift of God who wonderfully created human nature, and still more wonderfully restored it. Catherine of Siena, a great reforming fourteenth century mystic in the Church and who lived for many years solely on the Eucharist, wrote and promoted love of the Eucharist. Thomas Aquinas, at a time when participation at mass was weak, produced some of the classic poems/hymns on the theme of the Eucharist, encouraging renewed personal devotion.

In the background is the recognition that we become who we are in the Eucharist. Augustine's line clinches this when he reminds us, at the Eucharist we receive what we are, and we become what we receive: 'You reply "Amen" to that which you are, and by your reply you consent. For you hear "the Body of Christ" and you reply "Amen". Be a member of the Body of Christ so that your "Amen" may be true.'⁷

Martin Luther, the Eucharist and Personal Faith

And so we come to Luther. Already, on the eve of the Reformation, the question was not whether the church should be reformed, but when. It is of interest that Luther himself seldom used the term "reformation" though early characterization of the Reformation as an era linked it to his career. It was said to begin with the pinning of Ninety-Five Theses – and this has been disputed but that need not concern us here – on the door of Wittenberg Cathedral on October 31st 1517 (ever since called Reformation Day). For Luther, the crux of genuine reform, he said in an early sermon, is the proclamation of the gospel of grace alone. His treatment of the Eucharist is also in the context of this reformation underlining of grace alone.

Need of Faith. In a word, Luther saw that in our human condition we're afflicted by a 'curvature,' a turning back on ourselves that conceals itself even under the most noble motives and deeds. Seeing himself irrevocably lost, he experienced then the tremendous wrath of God. And this is what Luther means by 'tribulation.' But Luther also saw that God is not only judge, and hasn't only given us the law. There's another other aspect of the Christian message, which is the Gospel, the good news. Precisely when we're at the zero point and don't know what to do, God does not reject us forever, as we might think, but bends down towards our weakness and nothingness and recreates us. He does this on one condition: that we believe, that is, that we abandon ourselves to him with complete trust. It is a question of letting God convert us and re-create us: 'God's love does not find [in the world] what he loves, but he creates it.'⁸

It is in the light of this need to recognise our faith response to the Good News of God's benevolence that in the first phase of the Reformation (1517-1520), Luther reacted against the objective efficiency (*ex opere operato*) of sacraments. He maintained, rather, that what was constitutive of the Eucharist was a person's faith.⁹ Certainty was to be had only in accepting the gift

⁷ Agostino, *Sermo* 272, PL 38, 1247.

⁸ Heidelberg Disputation of April 26, 1518.

⁹ See WA 57/III, Lesson on letter to the Hebrews: what justifies is not the sacrament, but rather faith in the sacrament.

believing in the sure promise of God, and not in relying on one's own actions. Likewise, Luther was critical of reference to the sacrificial character of the mass as it seemed to him to take away from the meaning of the Eucharist as gift of God, substituting divine benevolence with an act of human reconciliation that overturns order of salvation. Though excluding the doctrine of transubstantiation, preferring the nominalist model of consubstantiation, we know that in debate with Zwingli, Luther affirms the ontological presence of Christ in the Eucharist. God himself who wanted the real presence.¹⁰ Luther also believed the practice of offering the laity the chalice was very important. In renewing belief in the Lord's presence in the Eucharist, Luther was concerned to underline the importance of the real presence and of personal faith. So we can say that Luther's reform project also involved rediscovery of *belief* in the Lord's eucharistic presence, this great gift that comes from the heart of God.

You see, therefore, that what we call the Mass is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God... If the Mass is a promise, as has been said, then access to it is to be gained, not with any works, or powers, or merits of one's own, but by faith alone. For where there is the word of the promising God, there must necessarily be the faith of the accepting believer. It is plain therefore, that the beginning of our salvation is a faith which clings to the word of the promising God who, without any effort on our part, in free and unmerited mercy takes the initiative and offers us the word of his promise.¹¹

Reformation Perspectives Encountering One Another Today

Almost five centuries have passed since Martin Luther and the Reformation from which many reformations, including Catholic emphases emerged. What we know is that positions got hardened on all sides regarding how we understood or expressed our belief in the Eucharist. We built up our own separate traditions and spiritual practices. We gained insights and composed hymns but separately. And that was the tragedy. Our united witness to the reforming power of the Eucharist suffered.

The good news today is that thanks to ecumenical dialogues the reforming perspectives are encountering one another. A new common desire is growing to share once again in the mystery of "the Upper Room" where the Christian dream was born: through the Eucharist to be built up as "God's family", as "one heart and one soul"; and open this reality wide to the whole of humanity. We are reaching the point when we can hope that tomorrow we'll once again bear united witness to the transforming power of this central mystery of our faith, the Eucharist.

As a flavour of how these encounters I'll refer to some of the statements that have issued from official dialogues.

Official Dialogues. ARCIC, for instance, believes that Anglicans and Catholics have a consensus on the central truths regarding Eucharistic doctrine.¹² It talks of "substantial agreement",¹³ defined as "agreement on

¹⁰ WA 26, 453/18: Vom Abendmahl Christi.

¹¹ *Babylonian Captivity*, 2.46

¹² The Agreed statement Eucharistic Doctrine and the 1979 Eucharist Elucidations are found in ARCIC's Final Report (1981). The 1993 Clarifications followed the official Anglican and Roman Catholic responses.

¹³ ARCIC, *Eucharist*, 12

essential points of Eucharistic doctrine”.¹⁴ It notes how its consensus reached on the nature of the Eucharist was “consonant with biblical teaching and with the tradition of our common inheritance”.¹⁵ Anglicans and Catholics understand the Eucharist as central to the life of the Church, nurturing and deepening the new relationship between God and humanity made possible by the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

Christ through the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist builds up the life of the Church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission. The identity of the Church as the body of Christ is both expressed and effectively proclaimed by its being centred in, and partaking of, his body and blood. In the whole action of the Eucharist, and in and by his sacramental presence given through bread and wine, the crucified and risen Lord, according to his promise, offers himself to his people” (Eucharist, 3).

In formulating a common understanding of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, ARCIC reflects in detail upon the notion of the Eucharist as memorial (anamnesis). In the Clarifications of 1993 the ARCIC commission affirmed its “belief that the Eucharist is truly a sacrifice, but in a sacramental way.” ARCIC is also careful to situate the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist within the context of the paschal mystery and God’s desire to transform all of humanity through it.¹⁷ And in all of this, ARCIC affirms that faith is required for the reception of the Eucharist to result in a life-giving and transforming encounter with the Lord.¹⁸

Other dialogues too have touched on several of the same themes as those of ARCIC. The Reformed-Catholic dialogue provides grounds for hope when it says:

While we are aware of the serious discrepancy between our claims to common theological understanding and our actual practices... We believe we have reached a common understanding of the meaning and purpose and basic doctrine of the Eucharist, which is in agreement with the Word of God and the universal tradition of the Church. We also believe that the way is clearly opening out before us on which remaining misunderstandings and disagreements about the Lord’s Supper can be cleared up. The terminology which arose in an earlier polemical context is not adequate for taking account of the extent of common theological understanding which exists in our respective churches”.¹⁹

Mention must be made here too of the great work done in the Methodist-Catholic dialogue. The International Methodist-Catholic dialogue met recently in Dublin. Bishop Michael Putney, the catholic co-chairman, told a group of us who met with them, that at the Synod in Rome last October, he told the Synod participants that this dialogue might appear to be like a Cinderella dialogue but like Cinderella it would become the most beautiful of them all. It points to the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church and says also in terms of unity and mission:

Methodists and Catholics are already agreed...that when the Eucharist is celebrated, we hear afresh the Word of God spoken to us; we enter together more deeply into the

¹⁴ ARCIC, *Eucharist*, co-chairmen’s preface

¹⁵ ARCIC, *Eucharist*, 1

¹⁶ ARCIC, *Eucharist*, 2

¹⁷ ARCIC, *Eucharist*, 6

¹⁸ ARCIC, *Eucharist*, 8

¹⁹ *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (1977), 91. See also, *Towards a Common Understanding of Church* (1990), 152.

saving mystery of Christ; we encounter Christ anew in a way which ensures the living presence of Christ at the heart of the Church; we are anointed by the transforming love which is God's Holy Spirit and become more truly the Body of Christ; we are sent forth together in Christ to share more deeply in God's work in our world; and we share together a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. As we celebrated the Eucharist, called together by the Father, the Risen Lord makes us more fully what he sills his church to be, by the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁰

The Reformed-Catholic dialogue underlines the link between the Eucharist and renewal, unity and mission:

The Eucharist is a source and criterion for the renewal of the Church. The Church's renewed understanding of the Eucharist may lead to a renewed way of celebrating the Eucharist, revealing the Church more clearly as essentially "The Eucharistic community".... The renewal of the Church through the Eucharist includes a continuous summons to church unity... At the same time the Eucharist requires and inspires the Church's sense of her vocation to bring the Gospel to the whole world in proclaiming the good news of God's salvation and exercising the work of reconciliation in its deeds.... Renewal, unity and mission are inseparable characteristics of the Church as it receives in faith the gift of the Eucharist.²¹

An Example. We also recognise today that the full visible organic unity we are striving for tomorrow does not mean a uniform expression concerning the Eucharist. ARCIC also acknowledges that "differences of theology and practice may well coexist with a real consensus on the essentials of eucharistic faith – as in fact they do within each of our communion".²² A significant example of this is the 2001 affirmation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the sacramental validity of the Assyrian anaphora of Addai and Mari, a Eucharistic Prayer that does not literally recount the words of Christ at the Last Supper. This is considered a remarkable breakthrough because the Catholic Church considers the words of the Eucharistic Institution a constitutive and therefore indispensable part of the Anaphora or Eucharistic Prayer. But a long and careful study from a historical, liturgical and theological perspective led to the conclusion of the affirmation of this Eucharistic prayer of Addai and Mari.

Journeying Towards Tomorrow: Living Today in the Intermediate Phase

Thanks to the almost 100 years of the ecumenical movement the churches have travelled a good distance together. We no longer consider one another rivals or enemies. We see each other as brothers and sisters. We live, work and pray together. We are in the process of a renewed discovery of the reforming power of the Eucharist and a renewed desire to provide a united witness to this central mystery in the life of the Church. As ARCIC puts it, "if there are any remaining points of disagreement they can be resolved on the principles here established."²³

Recognising the Intermediate Phase. We can't be prophets of doom and gloom about ecumenical developments regarding the Eucharist. Much has been achieved. But neither can we be ecumenical dreamers following

²⁰ The Seoul Report, 94; cf 93. See also the Dublin Report, 52.

²¹ *Presence of Christ in Church and World*, 88; cf. 75 and 86.

²² ARCIC, *Eucharist Elucidation*, 9

²³ ARCIC, *Eucharist*, 12

utopias. We still have not reached full communion as churches and ecclesial communities. Cardinal Kasper speaks of two utopias - the progressive type that thinks that differences between churches have been overcome or at least they are only a useless wrangle among theologians that we can easily leave aside. But, he says, just try to imagine a Catholic priest who would want to take away the tabernacle from the church, because he didn't want to be any different from Protestants, or a Protestant pastor who placed a tabernacle in his church. It is easy to imagine the disarray this would provoke in both communities, a disarray that would highlight very quickly the differences that unfortunately still exist.²⁴ Alongside the progressive utopia, there's what he calls the clerical-integralist utopia. It thinks it can regulate problems by putting up as many stop signs as possible. This too is no help as it suffocates already at birth any form of development and life.

The time we live in requires us we be neither prophets of gloom nor utopians! Rather, as Cardinal Kasper comments, we have to be realistic and recognise we are living in an intermediate phase. On our journey we have happily travelled a few miles but we haven't yet reached the goal. We are still in a period of growth and maturity in full communion among our churches.

Issues that remain. The Methodist-Catholic dialogue identifies several areas where further dialogue is needed regarding the Eucharist. In its Seoul Report, it says:

These include the nature and validity of the ministry of those who preside at the Eucharist, the precise meaning of the Eucharist as the sacramental "memorial" of Christ's saving death and resurrection, the particular way in which Christ is present in Holy Communion, and the link between eucharistic communion and ecclesial communion. It is essential that these issues be further explored.²⁵

The Catholic position is that the "Amen" that we respond in receiving the body of Christ is not simply an intellectual assent to specific Eucharistic dogma. It is intimately linked to one's insertion in the church in communion of faith, sacrament and ministry with our brothers and sisters over the centuries and with our brothers and sisters now around the world united with the Pope and bishops. Luther and Calvin would never have been able or wanted to say such a "yes" to the Catholic Eucharist in their time. Their protest was against the papacy, the mass, the church as it then presented itself. Many of these issues remain. So that at this point, normally, Eucharistic inter-communion is not possible. Thankfully, in recent years, the opportunities for non-Catholics to

²⁴ *Sacramento dell'Unità*, 63-64

²⁵ *Seoul Report*, 94. In offering its synthesis of the consensus between Anglicans and Catholics on eucharistic doctrine, IARCCUM's GTUM notes issues where further dialogue is needed. Firstly, it tells us that "Anglicans and Catholics acknowledge there is an intrinsic relationship between sharing the Eucharist and full ecclesial communion, but diverge on the way in which that is expressed on the way to full communion." Accordingly, "Church of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church therefore have different disciplines for eucharistic sharing" (*GTUM*, 46, 47-48). Secondly, while "[a]doration of Christ in the reserved sacrament is encouraged in the Roman Catholic Church" and "is also practised in some Anglican churches", there are some Anglicans who would find difficulty in these devotional practices because it is feared they obscure the true goal of the sacrament" (*GTUM*, 49). The Reformed-Catholic dialogue reflects issues that others would acknowledge as well (*The Presence of Christ in Church and world*, 92). The Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, among other questions, raises the question of the real presence. "There are differences, however, in theological statements on the mode and therefore duration of the real presence" (Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, *Eucharist*, 48, cf. 49-55)

receive the Eucharist in catholic celebrations have increased. But there is the pain of our situation of not yet normally being able to share fully in one another's Eucharist.²⁶

But that's not to say other forms of inter-communion are excluded. While not yet sharing fully in the Eucharist, we're not starting from zero. Catholics say that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life²⁷ but it would be wrong for us to concentrate everything on the summit. The Eucharist can be seen as summit only if around it there's a field and a plane. And there is much in this field and plane that we yet have to explore and live together. There are many "presences" of Jesus to be valued, shared and lived together (Word, neighbour, the poor, community). Our baptismal faith is the gateway into this inter-communion in the presences of Jesus in which we share. Through baptism we have been inserted the one Church (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4). The European Ecumenical Assembly held in Sibiu, Romania, underlined the need to rediscover our baptism and the Irish Inter-Church Meeting is taking up this point. Here we have the basis for initiatives, for instance, around the Word of God, ecumenical vespers, peace projects and liturgies, ecumenical pilgrimages, charitable works, local pastoral councils, evangelising projects.

Clearly, a major issue that faces us as we go forward is: what is the goal of the ecumenical journey? Different answers to this question bring different views of the unity of the Church and different perspectives along the way towards attaining the goal. For the churches born from the sixteenth century Protestant Reformations the goal is often proposed as consisting primarily in a shared interpretation of the Gospel leaving the question of institutional form by and large to one side. For the Catholic Church it is important to strive for visible organic unity and this involves a unity in faith, sacraments and apostolic ministry.²⁸ This unity, as we mentioned above, should not be considered as uniformity but rather allowing for variety of expression.

Cardinal Kasper comments that no one is able to establish in advance what an ecumenical future of unity in multiplicity is going to be like. No one is able to produce an advance blue-print of the future ecumenical form of the Church. In an ecumenism of life it's enough not to lose sight of the basic goal and then do what can today. The way of ecumenism is not like a runway for take off or landing all lit up right to the last metre. Rather it's like journeying

²⁶ Vatican II tells us that There are two main principles governing the practice of such common worship: first, the bearing witness to the unity of the Church, and second, the sharing in the means of grace. Witness to the unity of the Church very generally forbids common worship to Christians, but the grace to be had from it sometimes commends this practice."(UR, 8). The Code of Canon Law says something similar, "the salvation of souls must always be the supreme law" (c. 1752). There are some circumstances when a non Catholic Christian can be admitted to communion. In *Ut Unum Sint*, repeated in his encyclical letter, *Ecclesia de eucharistia*, 46, Pope John Paul II described how it was for him a "it is a source of joy to note that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the Sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments" (n. 46). Writing on this Card. Kasper said "I trust our priests will have sufficient pastoral and spiritual sensitivity to find, in harmony with their bishop and the line marked out by the Pope, solutions that respond to individual personal situations and the mulitformity of life" (*Sacramento dell'unità*, 73).

²⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

²⁸ Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2.

along the road with a lamp in our hand. There's light to the degree in which we ourselves go forward.²⁹

Receptive Ecumenism. Perhaps at this point we can refer to what has become known as the "Receptive Ecumenism" project. Its key idea is 'that the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not "What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?" but "What do we need to learn from them?"' Such a learning process as we move forward can only work with integrity if there is both love and humility. It requires we try with patience and love to move forward step by step during this intermediate phase. It is a process of reacquiring from others aspects of our common heritage that perhaps we have, to some extent or in some ways, lost or forgotten. This is the logic and the force of the re-reception called for by ARCIC in, for instance, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*³⁰ and *The Gift of Authority*.³¹ It could also be the case that in the case of the Eucharist too we are being called, all of us, into a new re-reception of the great reforming power of the Eucharist.

Catholics, for instance, have learned so much from Protestants about the Word of God which is so central to Eucharist. At the Synod of Bishops last October in Rome Cardinal Seán Brady spoke of what we can learn from the Protestant custom of having a Bible in the home and reading it often as a family. Such a rediscovery among Catholics would contribute to our reception of the Eucharist. It is also true that Protestant Churches have learned from Catholics to recognise the importance of liturgical symbols and liturgical celebrations.

The point is that in approaching the pain we feel regarding our sharing in the Eucharist, we should not lose sight of the fact that in the intermediate phase in which we find ourselves, we can live an "exchange of gifts", a deep sharing of our experiences, insights, traditions and practices and life deriving from the Eucharist.³² We can learn to be a blessing for one another as Card. Kasper put it at the Kirchentag in Berlin.

Journeying in the Presence of the Risen Christ. In this intermediate phase I want to suggest there is a presence of Jesus that we can share in, that we don't perhaps value enough. It is the presence promised by Jesus to his followers when he said: 'Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I among them' (Mt 18:20). The only condition for sharing in this communitarian presence of the Risen Christ among us is to be met together in his name, which, since 'name' according to Semitic thinking indicates a person's identity, means meeting together in Jesus' identity, that is in love, love to the extreme self-giving he displayed. Which is to say, in words taken from another gospel, it means living out the commandment described as 'new' and Jesus' 'own': 'Love one another as I have loved you' (Jn 13:34 and 15:12).

²⁹ *Sacramento dell'unità*, 79.

³⁰ See paras 3, 44, 47, 50, 63 and esp. 77 and 80. The process of re-reception is described at one point as follows: 'The freedom to respond in fresh ways in the face of new challenges is what enables the Church to be faithful to the Tradition which it carries forward. At other times, some element of the apostolic Tradition may be forgotten, neglected or abused. In such situations, fresh recourse to Scripture and Tradition recalls God's revelation in Christ: we call this process *re-reception*.' (3)

³¹ See paras 20, 52, esp. 24-26 and most esp. 62.

³² *Ut Unum Sint*, 28, 57.

This presence is not a pious hope or a mere formula. It is living and active. Even while not yet sharing fully in eucharistic communion with one another, we can experience the reforming presence of Christ just as the disciples on the Emmaus Road who felt their hearts burn within them as they found the scriptures opened to them (see Lk 24:32), they could read history together and eventually be led to share in the Eucharist. This experience of the Risen Christ among us is open to all, whatever their background. Christians of any tradition, therefore, can already come together in unity. And this is already an encounter with and in the Church, as Tertullian said, 'Where three are gathered together even if they are lay people, there is the church'³³ or Eusebius: 'The Churches, established all over the world, are those houses in whose midst God is always present, God who said, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them."³⁴ So even though there are barriers to full communion, Eucharistic sharing, institutional union, doctrinal concordance, even now we can, in reality, live in the one Church, the one Body of Christ that Christ himself generated through his life, death and resurrection.

Here I think of an experience with Rev. Dennis Cooke when he was president of the Edgehill College, Belfast. Together, guided by the Risen Christ, we were able to establish an "Exploring Theology Together" programme. Many bonds of communion built up on the basis of the Word, sharing of experience and insight.

The Crucified Christ. All of this would be utopic were it not rooted in the crucified Jesus, a theme very dear to the heart of the sixteenth century Lutheran Reformation, and ultimately, a theme found deep within the Eucharistic theology of all our traditions. It is he who shows how it is possible to have the completely self-dispossessed and other-receptive love needed for a living encounter in Jesus' name. Jesus Crucified and forsaken is Jesus in the climax of his passion, when he suffers the extremity of pain and division, the brutal reality of sin's exclusion from God, such that he cries out: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mt 27:26; Mk 15:34). It is here that redemption takes place since, as Paul put it, 'For our sake he [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Cor. 5:21). And it is here that all the negative is turned to positive. It is here that unity between God and humanity and unity among human beings is established: all barriers are destroyed.

This again is no pious hope or mere formula. For Jesus Crucified and Forsaken is met in every specific, concrete, historical suffering, including that of division among Christians. And just as every suffering, through the transformation worked by Jesus on the cross, has the paradoxical purpose of giving us new life through our participation in the divine life, so too, through our love for Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, recognised and embraced in every lack of unity, can division be the springboard to its opposite.

At times there are moments of tension, difficulty, or even hurt, among us. Things we say, things we don't do, misunderstanding, suspicion, disappointment,— it is in the love of Jesus Crucified that we the key to overcome every division. We do this simply by recognising the suffering,

³³ *On Exhortation to Chastity*, 7.

³⁴ *Commentary in Psalms*, 46 (PG 23, 422).

calling him by name in that suffering, abandoning himself, as he did unto the Father ("Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" [Lk 23:46]), and seeking to do whatever we can do in that moment to help remedy the situation.

Alongside Official Ecumenism. If we live in this way, we allow what has been called an ecumenism of the people to emerge, one that is rooted in a dialogue of life³⁵ in which the most the deepest things are shared with one another. We need this dialogue of life if we are to gather 'the fruits of many years of mutual encounter and dialogue',³⁶ answering thereby one of the main challenges faced by the official inter-Christian dialogues.³⁷ Regarding the dialogue of life, I am reminded of Luther's salutary warning: "It is through living, indeed through dying and being damned that one becomes a theologian, not through understanding, reading or speculation."³⁸ It was groups of friends living the Gospel together who gave rise initially to the ecumenical movement and they today too can be centres of life that give new impulse to the intermediary steps we need to take.

Conclusion

"Go back to the Upper Room" is the dream that we could say is emerging strongly from the heart of the Church of Christ of our time; go back to where by the institution of the Eucharist the Church was born as "God's family", as "one heart and one soul"; and open this reality wide to the whole of humanity, so that it may go forward decisively on the road to universal brotherhood. In this paper, I have suggested that a reformation perspective is linked to the Eucharist from the very beginning. Today too we are rediscovering the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. We are doing so also thanks to the at times apparently painfully slow official dialogues. But we can also do so thanks to the dialogue of life that is within the possibility of each of us. In a way we are living in a time when we are being invited to re-receive the great gift of the Eucharist that has been given to us. We can help each other do so. As Pope John Paul II in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* asked 'Could it not be that these divisions [among Christians] have also been a path continually leading the Church to discover the untold wealth contained in Christ's Gospel and in the redemption accomplished by Christ?', adding 'Perhaps all this wealth would not have come to light otherwise.'³⁹ It's the wealth of the Eucharist, yesterday and today that we are entrusted with handing on to tomorrow.

³⁵ See Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 57

³⁶ From the Communiqué of the *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, Plenary meeting, Bossey, Switzerland, 16-23 November 2008.

³⁷ Paul Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way of Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 33.

³⁸ WA 5.163.28 -9

³⁹ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* A Borzoi Book published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1994, Mondadori. Trans. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Ch. 'Why Divided?'