One Bread, One Body, One Church

Essays on the *Ecclesia* of Christ Today in Honor of Bernard P. Prusak

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Dr. Bernard P. Prusak has devoted much of his theological work to the subject of the church: for example, what it is, where it is, how it and its work are to be understood. If his work is to be appropriately celebrated, there must surely be a focus on where the church is today, and how it might be understood.

In this chapter, I will argue that, if this is to be done, we who wish to carry Prusak's work forward and expand on it must know how people speak *today* of the church. This is because, as I will demonstrate through a historical exploration of the language used regarding Eucharist, the language used to talk about the church has changed over the years, as understandings have changed, grown and developed. I will further argue that young people are particularly well placed to help us learn the developing language and to help the church(es) relate to the world; there is a particular subset within this group that can help us learn the language that can lead the church to the healing of disunity.

I. Change and Growth: Locating the Church

As humans, we experience something of reality. We interpret that experience within a framework of our language and understanding. But both understanding and language change and develop over time; hence, our interpretation of reality also changes. Frameworks of an earlier era can enhance and expand on present interpretations, but if we insist always on interpreting reality through the framework we have always known – that is, without allowing for the development of language and understanding, as well as learning to use that new language to speak of reality – we will become walking museum pieces, able to point to where the church was, but not where the church is, or will be. It is here that young people become our hope for locating and understanding the church. They, more than anyone, are on that cusp between language as it was, and language as it will be. Allow me to give a personal example.

As a child of Belgian immigrants to Canada, Flemish was the language initially spoken in our home, with English following quickly behind. When, in 1970, I first traveled to Belgium, I found that, within a day or two, I easily spoke the language of the towns from which my ancestors came. From time to time, however, it became evident that I was using words and understandings that my cousins were aware of, but which they no longer used, and which were no longer applicable. They were speaking the language of today; I was speaking the language of 1910, when my parents and grandparents emigrated. I now faced a choice. I could attempt to persuade them that my language and understanding were the correct ones to be applied to reality, or I could learn their language and understanding. The former was an academic exercise, beneficial and even enjoyable for those interested in museums and archives. The latter was a way of holding a conversation in which minds and hearts can be nourished, lives (theirs and mine) changed.

It is with that choice in mind that we now turn to the task of speaking about and locating the church. While we will include other developments in language, we will focus in particular on the Eucharist. In part, that is because human beings "eat nothing that is unmarked by the social situation of which language is the instrument."[1] How we interpret our experience of eucharistic eating is determined to a great extent by the language we use in speaking about it. It is also because the Eucharist is a prime example of how changes in language alter the way we interpret its reality. We will then go on to analyze three specific areas, each being a subset of the previous, where new languages are being developed and can be learned.

1. Sacraments

"By definition, sacraments cause what they signify and signify what they cause."[2] Or, as that oft-repeated statement says, "The Church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the Church."[3] Where the Eucharist is, then, the church must also be, both making and being made by it. That appears self-evident. But we must also ask, what do we mean by

[1] Ghislain Lafont, *Eucharist: The Meal and the Word*, ed. Jeremy O'Driscoll, OSB (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), 23.

[2] Jeffrey Vanderwilt, "Eucharistic Sharing and the Catholic Church," *Liturgy* 20, no. 4 (2005): 47-55, at 51.

[3] Henri de Lubac, cited in Chito Arevalo, *The Eucharist and the Church* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2002), http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2002-03/25-999999/06saiien.html.

'Eucharist'? It is here that an awareness of changes and development in language and understanding over centuries can point our way to a future understanding.

In Latin, we speak of '*sacramentum et res*'. The '*sacramentum*' or mystery is the action, the sign. The '*res*' we know to be the fruit of the sacrament, the reality which it brings about. Yet '*res*' literally means 'thing'. It is valuable to remember this. As with all reality, we cannot help but talk about it, yet we must remember that this reality is also beyond the capacity of all language to define it, to encapsulate it. Being beyond the capacity of even the most all-encompassing language, we can and must be open to talking about the reality in new ways and languages in our attempts to understand it, as well as share it with others.

In short, we have new interpretations of reality because new experiences have led to new understandings, with new language being developed to speak about that reality as experienced. That language, in turn, becomes the instrument for interpretation. We can see some of that development in scripture.

2. Language Development

As Joseph A. Fitzmyer observes, "In the OT Hebrew *bāśār*, 'flesh', carried the connotation not only of 'body' (see Ezek 11.19; 36.26; Ps 63.2; Job 4.15), but even of 'person' or 'self' (Num 16.22; 27.16; Isa 40.5-6; Ps 145.21)."[4] We also see the Aramaic word *biśrî* for body (Mk 14.22; Lk 22.19b) and the Aramaic *dĕmî* (Mk 14.24) or *bidmî* (Lk 22.20) for 'my blood'.[5] Whichever words are used, one becomes aware that we are dealing with something beyond the merely physical. There was an understanding that blood and life were synonymous. When the blood was gone from the body, life was gone. The connection was obvious and easy.

In the Greek of the New Testament, the term *sōma*, used in 1 Corinthians and the Synoptic Gospels, probably has to be understood not merely in the sense of 'body', but even of 'self', a sense found elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Cor 9:27, 13:3; Rom 12:1; Phil 1:20) and also

[4] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ, *The Gospel according to Luke (X–XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible 28a (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1399-1400, cited in Bernard P. Prusak, "Explaining Eucharistic 'Real Presence': Moving beyond a Medieval Conundrum," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 2 (2014): 231-259, at 234.

[5] Prusak, "Explaining Eucharistic 'Real Presence'," 234.

in classical and Hellenistic Greek.[6] Today we know that the body and the self are not synonymous. Our language and understanding has changed. We now know that while the body is necessary if the self is to have earthly expression, the self is more than the body. Similarly, we now know that blood, while necessary for animal life, is not itself life. As with the body and self, our understanding of what blood is and does has also changed. The earlier understanding leads to philosophical and ethical dilemmas, for example, regarding blood transfusions: Are we infusing the life of one person into that of another? Knowing what we know today, we face no such quandary: we know that when we have a blood transfusion, we are simply infusing a necessary life-supporting liquid, not the life itself.

As a further example, Bernard Prusak makes a very legitimate point about the term 'person', saying that "Jesus used the term 'body' to express what we intend to express when we use the term 'self' or 'person'."[7] In a footnote on the subject, he writes,

> It is important to keep in mind that the concept of 'person', so familiar to us, was not operative in the NT. Our concept presupposes the development that followed Boethius's definition of *person* – about 500 years after Jesus' death and resurrection – as "an individual [and thus, incommunicable] substance of a rational nature" (Boethius, *Liber de persona et duabus naturis contra Eutychen et Nestorium* 3 [PL 64 1343]).[8]

Once again, we have an example of the development of language, the use of a term that was unknown, then became known, and is today commonplace – though its understanding today may well differ from that of Boethius, with his focus on substance. This development did not render earlier understandings null and void (they remain fully valid within their context), but provided new ways of speaking about, and new ways of interpreting, that which is experienced.

II. The Eucharist and the Church

Words such as body, blood, self, and person all become caught up in the term 'eucharist'. Having looked at the development in understanding of these terms, it now becomes necessary to look at eucharist itself, in order

[6] Prusak, "Explaining Eucharistic 'Real Presence'," 234.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., n. 18.

to see how our understanding and language surrounding it has changed over time.

1. The Early Church

As Joseph Martos has indicated, "The noun *ευχαριστια* appears nowhere in the New Testament as the name of a Christian ritual. Instead, forms of the verb *ευχαριστειν* are used to express the giving of thanks, especially over food."[9] Eucharist, in the days of the early church, was understood as something one *does*. Prusak shows that "[i]n the earliest centuries, the Eucharist was a celebration in which the entire assembly was actively involved."[10] People gathered as what we might call a 'eucharisting' community, a community that gathered, not 'to receive the Eucharist', but 'to eucharist'. There is a physical dimension to expressing this, as well. For example, in Canada the bishops chose, in the English-language liturgy introduced in 2011, to have us remain standing after Communion. The result is that, instead of retreating to our individual acts of piety, we kinesthetically indicate that we are involved in a common meal, and continue that involvement until all have eaten. As Gerard Kelly states, "It is not simply a matter of getting the ritual gestures right; it is rather a matter of the ritual gestures being indicative of a reality beyond the liturgical assembly."[11]

This in no way suggests that people who gathered in the early church to eucharist did not believe that they received Christ. Rather, receiving Christ present was part and parcel of the God-given fruit of eucharisting, of giving thanks.

2. Later Developments

Translating the Bible into Latin brought about a significant change. The word, *Eucharist,* was transliterated, and thereby incorporated into Latin as a loan word – and it took the form of a noun, morphing in meaning.

> The Greek word had meant thanksgiving and it referred to what Christians did when they worshiped. Now the Latin word became a proper noun – the Eucharist, also the Blessed Eucharist or the Most

[9] Joseph Martos, *Deconstructing Catholic Theology and Reconstructing Catholic Ritual* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications/Wipf and Stock, 2015), 78.

[10] Bernard P. Prusak, "Liturgy as Essential Lynchpin for a Hermeneutic of Vatican II," *Louvain Studies* 38, no. 2 (2014): 126-148, at 'Abstract'.

[11] Gerard Kelly, "Intercommunion and Eucharistic Hospitality," in *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship*, ed. Margaret Press (Sydney: St. Paul's Publications, 2001), 109-127, at 117.

> Holy Eucharist – and it referred to the consecrated elements that were offered to God and distributed to the faithful during the mass.[12]

There was still a sense of action, but the action was now relegated to the person with priestly powers, with the baptized standing by, watching. Active participation by the baptized deteriorated over time. This did not happen immediately. Indeed, it took centuries., but it happened. "After the Eucharistic controversies of the eleventh century, believers wanted to see the Eucharist, but seldom received it. They no longer became what they received, the Body of Christ."[13] As Ghislain Lafont says, "Jesus said 'take and eat'. But there was no taking anymore, and scarcely any eating. The sacrament as such was reduced to nearly nothing for the sake of a content that was all but cut off from it." Writing about this change, Lafont goes on to say that, "From the Baroque period … down to our own times, all the realism of the Eucharist was centered not on the act of eating but on the real presence of Christ in that which was eaten."[14]

Note how, even today, we tend to think of Eucharist in noun form: that is, when we speak about 'the Eucharist', we refer predominantly to the consecrated elements, understood to be Christ himself under the appearance of bread and wine. And we capitalize the term, because we are referring to a divine person, not a liturgical action.[15]

This has led to some mysterious twists, painfully experienced by many interchurch couples. Such couples can be defined as follows:

> An interchurch family includes a husband and wife who come from two different church traditions (often a Roman Catholic married to a Christian of another communion). Both of them retain their original church membership, but so far as they are able they are committed to live, worship and participate in their spouse's church also.[16]

There is more to this definition, but the rest of it will be taken up below. Such couples will often find the non-Catholic spouse welcome to actively join in worship by way of the liturgy, including the Eucharistic prayer – i.e., 'eucharisting' – but then not welcome to receive 'the Eucharist'.

[12] Martos, *Deconstructing Catholic Theology*, 164.

[13] Prusak, "Liturgy as Essential Lynchpin," 'Abstract'.

[14] Lafont, *Eucharist*, 12.

[15] Cf. Joseph Martos, *Honest Rituals, Honest Sacraments: Letting Go of Doctrines and Celebrating What's Real* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications/Wipf and Stock, 2017), 140.

[16] *Interchurch Families and Christian Unity: Rome 2003* (Interchurch Families International Network, 2003), B,1, http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/confer/rome2003/documents/roma2003_en.pdf.

The later transliterated Latin noun thus takes precedence over the earlier, scriptural verb.

The language of the eucharist/Eucharist/Mass changed in other ways, too. While from the very first it had been called a sacrifice, the word used was *thusia*, an act of offering, usually to a god, and commonly associated with a fellowship meal. The thanksgiving/eucharistic meal could be seen in that way. As Martos points out, "the purity of the sacrifice regards the ritual readiness of the participants, not the quality of the offering. … The confession of faults and reconciliation with one another ensures that the participants are ritually pure."[17] What happened over time is important:

> Centuries later, when the full meal had evolved into a symbolic meal of bread and wine, the concept of sacrifice was still applied to Christian worship, but the meaning shifted. Instead of the emphasis being placed on the sacred meal, it was put on the sacred food, which was also called a sacrifice. The Greek *thusia* was translated into the Latin *sacrificium*, literally something made sacred. The sacred food, in the minds of Christians who had never attended a pagan sacrifice, was the body and blood of Christ.[18]

3. Into the Middle Ages

From offerings to God through a fellowship meal celebrated by ritually pure people, we moved to Christ being the pure sacrifice. Once again, we have changes and developments in language, such that a new way of thinking and understanding arose. This was the language and understanding that the schoolmen of the Middle Ages inherited. As priests, they considered themselves as joining to the sacrifice of Christ.

In the Middle Ages, too, a new understanding was developing in response to questions about what happens in the Eucharist. If we were receiving Christ, should we refer to what was happening as *substitution*,[19] *consubstantiation*,[20] or (eventually) *transubstantiation*?[21]

[17] Martos, *Deconstructing Catholic Theology*, 111.

[18] Martos, *Honest Rituals, Honest Sacraments*, 141.

[19] The bread and wine is removed, replaced by God with the body and blood of Christ, while allowing the appearances to remain the same.

[20] With *con*, meaning *with*, combined with *substantia*, a noun referring to the *thing/reality* in question, i.e., the body and blood of Christ was added to the bread and wine, with no change in the original *substantia* taking place.

[21] *Trans* meaning *from-to*, or *across*, combined with *substantia*, once again a noun referring to the *thing* in question. This was different from a *substantial* change, where both the *thing/reality* and the way it appears to the senses change. In *transubstantiation*,

There were arguments against the first two, though *consubstantiation* enjoyed favor until the sixteenth century. *Transubstantiation* gained favor with Aquinas and the Aristotelians who, as Martos points out, were aware that something happened in the Eucharist, something changed in their presence, giving them an experience of the real presence of Christ, even if they did not yet have the words to explain it. They eventually developed that language from the works of Aristotle. And so, *transubstantiation* became an apt way (even if not the only way) to speak about Eucharist.[22] Yet, we must remember, "for more than half of the Church's lifetime it did not know the word transubstantiation."[23] Here again, a development in understanding led to a development in language, which led, in turn, to a new way of interpreting reality.

Once again, we have an example of the development of language and the use of a term that was unknown, then became known, and is today commonplace – though the understanding of *substance* and *substantial* today may well differ from that of Boethius. In Aristotelian understanding, a *substantia* was a thing-in-itself; today, it is predominantly understood in adverbial or adjectival form. For example, this item is substantially different from that one, or perhaps one item or body of work is more substantial than another.

Another example can be found in the Latin form of dismissal at the end of the liturgy. This came to be '*ite, missa est*', which translates literally as: 'Go, it is sent'. That may have referred to the sending of the elements to those who were unable to attend due to illness or age. It could also have referred to the fact that the liturgy was ended, and we were now sent out into the world. The exact meaning of the words seems to have been lost in time. Regardless, ecclesial language began to speak of the liturgical action as the *missa*, the Mass.

As Martos has compellingly demonstrated, such language – used to speak about sacraments in general, and Eucharist in particular – was in common use and intelligible for some 750 years, until the middle of the twentieth century. What he also demonstrates is that it is no longer the language in use today, and it is no longer intelligible. The language of Aristotle and the Scholastics has given way to a contemporary language that ranges from similar words with different understandings and

one *thing/reality* becomes another *thing/reality*, though the *accidents*, what appears to the senses, remain the same.

[22] Cf. Martos, *Honest Rituals, Honest Sacraments*, 64-68.

[23] Gerard Kelly, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of Transubstantiation," in *The Eucharist: Faith and Worship*, ed. Press, 56-74, at 66.

nuances, through to entirely different words that speak about experiences of the realities, perhaps casting new light and new understanding on those ancient rituals and realities.

4. Language, Theology, and Ecclesiology

A key indicator that the church in recent times is recognizing the need for new language to speak about contemporary realities is found in the document *Nostra aetate* from the Second Vatican Council, promulgated in 1965.[24] First drafted to speak only of relations between Catholics and Jews, by the time of publication it had broadened its scope, including reference to Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. An example of the change that it brought about can be found in the difference between prayers before and after its publication. As Maureen Fielder points out, whereas before 1960 and the Council, the prayer of the church was "Let us pray also for the *faithless* Jews," we now were called to pray for the Jews as "the first to hear the word of God that they may continue to grow in the love of God's name and in faithfulness to God's covenant."[25]

Tom Roberts, editor of the *National Catholic Reporter*, says, "since the Second Vatican Council document Nostra Aetate, things have shifted rather dramatically. That document was the unassailable sign to the Catholic community and the world beyond that the church could come to a new understanding of long-held 'truths'."[26] In line with new understandings, Raymond Moloney speaks of three benchmarks in the process of scriptural development, including "the progressive elimination of historical details; the setting of phrases in parallel; [and] the explicitation of the implicit."[27] The same process can be seen to take place in theological and ecclesiological development, as well. Quoting J. Jungmann, Moloney writes,

> The great change which occurred in liturgical practice, *the greatest perhaps in the whole course of the history of the Mass* [emphasis added],

[24] *Nostra aetate* (October 28, 1965), 2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

[25] Maureen Fielder, "Nostra Aetate Proves That Change Is Possible," *National Catholic Reporter* (26 October, 2015), https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/nostra-aetate-proves-change-possible.

[26] Tom Roberts, "NCR Connections: New Series Explores How Jews Appreciate Catholic Tradition," *National Catholic Reporter* (26 November, 2018), https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/ncr-connections/ncr-connections-new-series-explores-how-jews-appreciate-catholic?utm_source=nov_+26+connections_3+views&utm_campaign=c-c_122017&utm_medium=email.

[27] Raymond Moloney, *The Eucharist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 20.

> was the abandonment of the meal as a setting for the Mass. … [T]he supper character of the Christian assembly could and did disappear, and the celebration became in truth a Eucharistic celebration. This change had occurred already at the end of the first century.[28]

Pointing to the Eucharist as sacrifice, Moloney argues, "Sacrifice is an elusive notion. … [N]o acceptable definition has ever been able to establish itself. … Sacrifice seems to be one of those primal notions of the human mind which apparently we can grasp and implement long before being able to put it into words."[29] We are conversant with the term 'sacrifice', usually understanding it as a giving-up of something of value. There is, however, another way of seeing 'sacrifice'. What happens if we consider that the root of sacrifice is *sacrum facere*, that is, 'making holy'? Might we then come away with a very different understanding of sacrifice? Might we then say that God sent God's Son to make humans, the earth, and indeed the entire universe holy – with his death being the consequence of our responsorial action, and ultimately the means whereby Christ makes all holy? The way we speak about reality is an indicator of how we interpret reality, and indeed even contributes to that interpretation.

Moloney presents three forms of language to express the presence of Christ in the Eucharist: namely *identity*, *change*, and *presence*. He goes on to say that "the expression 'the Real Presence' is so familiar to us today that it is difficult to realize that, strictly speaking, it comes into use, in this precise way, only from the Middle Ages on."[30] Once again, we had a change in language, thought and understanding, albeit some 750 years ago.

On limiting admission to the Eucharist, Moloney writes,

> Throughout the history of the sacrament, admission to the Eucharist has never been indiscriminate. Already John 6 implies that the Eucharist is for believers. St Paul wished to refuse the sacrament to those who do not examine themselves and discern the body. The *Didache* withholds it from the unreconciled. According to St Justin it is only for those who believe, have been baptized, and live according to the gospel.[31]

Moloney refers also to marriage in the same vein, arguing that, "in the case of either sacrament (i.e. Eucharist and marriage), one can falsify the sign by anticipating the union in a sinful way."[32] I wholeheartedly agree.

[28] Josef A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy: To the Time of Gregory the Great* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960), 37-38, cited in Moloney, *The Eucharist*, 79.
[29] Moloney, *The Eucharist*, 24.
[30] Ibid., 55.
[31] Ibid., 202.
[32] Ibid., 203.

Yet my agreement leads me to ask: In the case of reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist by a Catholic person and that person's spouse of another Christian tradition, in what way is the sign sinfully anticipated and therefore falsified, such that the person of another Christian tradition is not to be made welcome?

The words of the Lutheran theologian Paul A. Schreck accurately describe our present situation: "Invariably, we have shared together in the readings; they have been interpreted in gospel preaching; we turn to the liturgy of the Table and I am ready to eat but cannot."[33] People who defend this closed communion draw their stance from 1 Cor 11:23-29, wherein Paul warns of the dangers of eating and drinking unworthily. As Schreck says, "*Pastoral concern* for the souls of nonmembers is therefore said to be the basis for exclusion from the Table."[34] In short, it is to protect people that the choice is made not to feed them!

In this area as with others, there has been some change in understanding within the church. A concrete example of such change is given in the fact that, prior to Vatican II, "the Roman Catholic church did not speak of the Christian denominations that resulted from the Reformation as churches; but in the Second Vatican Council these groups were spoken of as 'churches or ecclesial communities', a change that seems to have theological implications."[35] The theologians who made that statement then continued, recognizing that the issue of 'apostolic succession', hitherto seen as applying solely to episcopal consecration, actually had a broader remit – that is, "despite the lack of episcopal succession, the Lutheran church by its devotion to gospel, creed, and sacrament has preserved a form of doctrinal apostolicity."[36]

For the theologians, this change in language connotes a change in understanding, with important ecclesiological ramifications:

> In fact, we see no persuasive reason to deny the possibility of the Roman Catholic church recognizing the validity of this Ministry. Accordingly we ask the authorities of the Roman Catholic church whether the ecumenical urgency flowing from Christ's will for unity may not dictate that the Roman Catholic church recognize the

[33] Paul A. Schreck, "Eating and Drinking Judgment: The Sacrament of Unity as a Sign and Source of Division," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 42, no. 4 (2007): 608-618, at 609.

[34] Ibid., 610.

[35] Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy, eds., *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry* (New York: USA National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, 1970), 24; cited in Schreck, "Eating and Drinking Judgment," 614.

[36] Ibid.

> validity of the Lutheran Ministry and, correspondingly, the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharistic celebrations of the Lutheran churches.[37]

The Second Vatican Council, in its statement *Unitatis redintegratio*, indicated that all "who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect."[38] These two aspects of communion have at times been spoken of as 'real, yet imperfect', a phrase taken up in various forms in various places.[39] This phraseology connotes a particular understanding of the reality of ecclesial unity, with the emphasis falling on imperfection. If (and, I believe, when) the day comes that we speak instead of 'imperfect, yet real' communion, we will have reached a new stage in realizing the unity which joins estranged communities. The words will be exactly the same, but the changed order will connote a new emphasis, and a new understanding.

Within interconfessional dialogues we have also seen changes in language, which connote a change in theological and ecclesiological thinking, even if that thinking has not yet become fully accepted throughout the body of Christ. As Michael Fahey states:

> Authorities in several churches remain unwilling to permit canonical adjustments to allow for eucharistic sharing, even when agreed doctrinal positions regarding the eucharist, the nature of ordination, the effects of baptism, etc., illustrate that what were considered church-dividing issues are in fact different theological emphases that do not of themselves warrant denial of eucharistic hospitality.[40]

Prusak, in an abstract of his 2014 article in *Louvain Studies*, writes, "Vatican II's Constitution on the Liturgy finally recovered a foundational doctrine – that the full and active participation of the baptized is essential to the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, which actualizes the universal Church in and through the assembly in a particular locale."[41]

[37] Schreck, "Eating and Drinking Judgment," 614.

[38] *Unitatis redintegratio* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1964), 3.

[39] *The Gift of Authority* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 6. See also Tod Brown, *Full Communion: The Catholic Understanding* (Paulist Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Office, 2002), http://www.tomryancsp.org/full.htm. Also John Paul II, *John Paul II on Imperfect Communion with Other Christian Communities*, https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/john-paul-ii-on-imperfect-communion-with-other-christian-communities.

[40] Michael Fahey, "Shifts in Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant Ecclesiology from 1965 to 2006," *Ecclesiology* 4 (2008): 134-147, at 141.

[41] Prusak, "Liturgy as Essential Lynchpin," 'Abstract'.

This is important, given that we are seeing new languages emerge in other parts – in other particular locales – of the world. Once a Eurocentric church, we are now coming to recognize that in fact the church is global, with the voices and languages of Asians, Africans, women, and indigenous peoples beginning to be heard and taken seriously.

III. Approaching New Language(s)

How are we to approach the new languages that speak about eucharistic reality? The gospel reading from the Feast of the Holy Family offers an example. Here, we find it said of Jesus that "all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers" (Luke 2:47). Clearly he must have told the listeners something, yet we learn only that "they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, *both listening to them and asking them questions*" (Luke 2:46, emphasis added). It can be inferred from this passage that the truly important thing for the people with whom Jesus spent time was to be asked about their experience, be allowed to talk about it in their own language, their own words. From that experience, they came to know him as one with understanding and answers.

Similarly, in the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), it is only after the disciples have been invited to speak about their experience, to give voice to the language they use as they interpret and question the events, that Jesus enhances their understanding through the use of ancient texts and language. Where are we to look to find the new language, expressing understanding, that will help us interpret reality and discover the presence of the church? Two specific passages offer a clear indication.

The first is from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [*sic*] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."[42] The experiences of the realities of the world are points of connection, for we have those experiences in common, even if we may interpret them, and speak about them, in different ways. They are, therefore, places where we may learn from each other of the riches of God.

[42] *Gaudium et spes* (December 7, 1965), 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

The second can be found in the words of John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio*: "The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason too it can and should be called 'the domestic church'."[43] Our mind clings to the last part of the statement, that of being a *domestic church*; much has been written on the subject. Yet we forget that the first part of the sentence is as important, namely that *Christian families* constitute a specific *revelation* and *realization* of *ecclesial* communion. It is in the experiences and languages of contemporary Christian families that we can discover where the church is, and how it is lived.

IV. Three Points of Revelation and Realization

I therefore propose three specific areas of Christian family life as points of revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, that is, of the location and activity of the church. The first and most obvious is that of faithful Christian families throughout the world, be they European, American, African, Asian, mixed race, indigenous or otherwise. Living in a secular world, they still gather as people of God to eucharist, to give thanks, and receive Christ the living God. The languages (for there may well be several) they develop and use, often within a secular context, to speak of their experience of sacrament and of mystery, offer a revelation of their realization of ecclesial communion, and hence become a focal point for discovering and expressing where the church is.

Within Christian families, there is a further subset that may afford a great gift for learning new languages, new interpretations. This subset includes Christian families in which the spouses come from different Christian traditions. We have already seen a partial definition of such families. As Pope John Paul II said while speaking to interchurch families at York, UK, 1982, "You live in your marriage the hopes and the difficulties of the path to Christian unity."[44] Each spouse in these families brings to their marriage, their 'domestic church', a 'pearl of great price', namely that spouse's experience of a faithful God, and the language used to speak of that experience. Because they participate as much as possible in their

[43] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), 21.

[44] Ruth Reardon, "Interchurch Families: Witness to Christian Unity" (Interchurch Families International Network, 2010), http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/index.php/other-articles/2010/interchurch-families-witness-to-christian-unity.html.

spouse's church while remaining also faithful to their own ecclesial and linguistic expression of faith, they learn to receive from their spouse that person's language of faith. One spouse may bring a language that was intelligible over centuries (whether or not it still is) and share that with the other spouse, who may well live and interpret reality through language that is far more contemporary, and with different interpretation. Such spouses carry both traditions, and both languages, within the one coupled person that is formed of their marriage.[45] As such, they have experience of bridging ecclesial/sacramental languages, of learning from each other different interpretations of reality, and the words each uses to speak about that reality. In the process, they enhance the development of new languages to help each other understand, together building the unity of their marriage – and the growing unity of their churches.

We can look also to the children of interchurch families. Such families speak of their responsibility toward their children as follows: "If they have children, as parents they exercise a joint responsibility under God for their religious and spiritual upbringing, and they teach them by word and example to appreciate both their Christian traditions."[46] The result is that, while their parents carry two traditions and languages within their marriage, the children learn, as if by osmosis, to carry both within the same body. Conversant with the language traditions of both their parents, they have their own experiences of eucharistic reality, and they develop their own contemporary language to speak about that reality. As such, they may have something to say to move us forward on the journey to Christian unity.

In this, we must bear in mind the words of Francis Sullivan, who states, "The unity which is the goal of the ecumenical movement may have to be different from the unity that exists in any present church."[47] Related to this idea, we can say that the language we presently use, and have used for centuries, may itself be inadequate to the task, even though it may make its own contribution.

[45] Cf. Ruth Reardon, "Interchurch Marriage: Towards a Spirituality" (Interchurch Families International Network, 2017), http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/index.php/other-articles/2010-forward/interchurch-marriages-towards-a-spirituality-2017.html; first published in Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhan, ed., *Marriage – Constancy and Change in Togetherness* (Munster: LIT Verlag, 2017).

[46] *Interchurch Families and Christian Unity: Rome 2003* (Interchurch Families International Network, 2004), B,1, http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/confer/rome2003/documents/roma2003_en.pdf.

[47] Francis A. Sullivan, "Faith and Order: The Nature and Purpose of the Church," *Ecumenical Trends* 32 (2003): 145-152, at 149; cited in George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 208.

V. A Source for Hope

We have been on a journey of discovery of language and understanding, and of changes in those. We come finally to that group of people through whom we can hope to have the greatest opportunity to locate the church, as it is today, and as it will be in the future. It is with the young, be they of one tradition only, or of interchurch families. Each offers specific gifts.

It has been about fifty-five years since we saw the church enter a new era, a new connection with reality, through the work of Vatican II. The children of the earlier era (people like me), still steeped in the language of the previous centuries, have grown up and had children of their own, and in many cases grandchildren. Their children, and especially their grandchildren, have, by and large, grown up in a world with different words and understandings. Because of migration, be it due to wars, famine, or simple economic realities, they come in touch with people of different languages, different cultures, and different experiences. In addition, they are in touch with different technological realities, developing languages to express those realities. In short, they are in touch with the world in the language of today.

It is to such people, the young of today, that we must now turn. This is not merely because they are at home with social media, more technologically adept, and/or have more energy than us, all of which might in any case be true. Rather, it is because they hold the keys to a different language, one with and through which the church may make itself known, realizing the kingdom of God in the world today. That will require, on the part of we who are older, a capacity to listen and learn, rather than tell and teach.

Within that group, we must turn also to the children of interchurch families in particular. In such interchurch children, we may find new languages of faith, new understandings of timeless realities, which will enlighten our churches, enabling them to take the next steps toward the unity for which Christ prayed. Such children experience *within themselves* the intimate connection of estranged ecclesial communities, personally reconciling those estrangements even while their communities are not yet able to realize that reconciliation. In their experience, their reconciliation, we have the possibility of rediscovering the presence of the church, across peoples and Christian traditions.

Listening to and learning from the experiences and languages of others – especially the young – before sharing our own is not an easy task, but it is a necessary one. It demands a time of relationship, of responsibly

living on the margins between different parts of the same body. As Philip A. Rolnick argues, "The reality of a relationship, its 'betweenness', must be *enacted, actually lived,* just as the reality of a statement hangs in abeyance, awaiting its assertion by a responsible knower."[48]

If what we believe of the sacraments, and of faith, is real and true, then we who are older members of the church can accept the challenge to converse in an atmosphere of receptive learning with young people of today. This would then allow all of us, the old and young, across all seeming lines of demarcation, to come to know by experience that the Good News of God, lived in the church, is ever real, ever true, ever ancient, ever new.

[48] Philip A. Rolnick, *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God* (Atlanta, GA: The American Academy of Religion, 1993), 165, cited in Schreck, "Eating and Drinking Judgment," 617.