

**Be Healed: Healing the whole person through the Eucharist**

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*“Let light shine out of darkness.” 2 Corinthians 4:6*

*“The Eucharist is medication for the soul.” St. Irenaus*

*“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” Roman Missal #132*

Catholics encounter the fullness of the Trinity, leading to healing of the whole person, through the celebration and participation in the Eucharist. “The fruit of the Eucharist...is Communion...with the Blessed Trinity.”<sup>1</sup> Mind, Body and Spirit are made whole by our thanksgiving to the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit as our participation in Divine life.<sup>2</sup> It is the most regular place of encounter sustaining a believer through the joys and sorrows of life as the source and summit of our faith.<sup>3</sup> The Eucharist is the deepest place of encounter with the Risen Jesus, identity of the church, and provides forgiveness of venial sins.<sup>4</sup> It is the most privileged means of relationship with God.<sup>5</sup> We touch Jesus in the Eucharist.<sup>6</sup>

Many people look for healing. Living in a good but imperfect world, God’s people are afflicted by of the wounds of original sin and evil. “The fullness (of God) is already present in our world, but everything has not yet been brought to completion.”<sup>7</sup> While there are many forms of healing offered through society such as twelve step programs, Yoga classes, etc., only the Eucharist heals us completely because it is God’s work. A healthy culture exists only when

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship*, (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2005), 155.

<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1358.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, #1324.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, #1416.

<sup>5</sup> Driscoll Lectures, June, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 83.

there is reference beyond itself.<sup>8</sup> The structure of Word and Sacrament provides a tangible means for the continuing mission of the Risen Christ in the world. Never underestimate the power of the Sacraments. This paper proposes the Eucharist as a means of healing from sin, division, loss, depression, and apathy. Hopefully these thoughts are a tool for deepening our faith and utilizing in pastoral settings such as a homily series, faith formation talks, or retreats.

To fully appropriate the capacity for experiencing healing it is assumed a certain amount of intentionality and participation on behalf of the individual which is fostered by a well planned and executed celebration of the Eucharist. This would include ministers that both understand their role and express their faith through their participation. The Liturgy is always a communication of salvation in Jesus who conquers sin and death as it is words that render precise what Jesus is.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Eucharist Heals Sin*

Spiritually, some might only focus on our sins and need for forgiveness while others might be influenced by an increasing loss of the sense of sin altogether in our increasingly secular world. The church emphasizes our goodness as beloved children of God but at the same time all areas of healing through the Eucharist are a result of sin and being part of our fallen world. Although impacted by the sins of others, the faithful look for healing of their personal and our communal sins. While mortal sin should be reconciled through the Sacrament

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<sup>8</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

of Reconciliation, every celebration of the Eucharist provides forgiveness for our venial sins as we encounter the Risen Jesus in Word and Sacrament.<sup>10</sup>

To highlight this offering of healing every celebration of the Eucharist regardless of liturgical season includes an act of contrition in the introductory rites. Pastorally, it is encouraged to vary which form depending on the liturgical season to highlight its importance. For example, the “Confiteor” during Lent, the Sprinkling Rite during Easter, the shortest version (Form B) during Advent/Christmas and the strophes plus Lord have mercy... (Form C) during Ordinary time.<sup>11</sup> While it is encouraged to emphasize one’s personal sins, the penitential rite is also a way in which we intercede on behalf of our communal sins united through the Holy Spirit. Asking for forgiveness of sins during the introductory rites helps us to remember our thanksgiving to the Father for the reconciliation he has already offered us in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. In Jesus we are given an even better salvation from sin than even before original sin.<sup>12</sup>

Every Eucharistic prayer highlights this forgiveness of sins in the consecration particularly “The Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins...”<sup>13</sup>

Parts of the communion rite also focus our attention on forgiveness from sin. During the Our Father the people say: “...Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass

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<sup>10</sup> Catechism, #1416.

<sup>11</sup> Roman Missal, p. 515-520, #4-7.

<sup>12</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Roman Missal et al, Eucharistic Prayers.

against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”<sup>14</sup> The priest alone continues saying “Deliver us, Lord, we pray from every evil....that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin...”<sup>15</sup> We trust in God’s mercy towards our sins and the sins of our brothers and sisters, growing more compassionate and empathetic to the struggles of others as we acknowledge our own faults. Before the sign of peace the priest continues: “....look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church.”<sup>16</sup> In the interceding Church human weakness becomes the living locus by which the power of God acts; more astonishing still, the sin of men becomes the crack through which healing and the fullness of merciful grace come to them.<sup>17</sup> The Agnus Dei continues with an emphasis upon forgiveness of our sins; “...you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us...”<sup>18</sup> One of the optional ‘private’ prayers of the priest states “...free me by this, your most holy Body and Blood, from all my sins and from every evil...”<sup>19</sup> the priest slightly raises the host and says “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.”<sup>20</sup>

The last area to highlight healing from sin is in Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I. This is a beneficial option to use during Lent or in other appropriate pastoral context to highlight the healing of our sins in the Eucharist. In the preface prayer we hear: “...you constantly offer pardon and call on sinners to trust in your forgiveness alone. Never did you turn away from us, and though time and again we have broken your covenant, you have bound

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<sup>14</sup> Roman Missal, p. 663, #124.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 664, #125.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 666 #126.

<sup>17</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 154.

<sup>18</sup> Roman Missal, p. 667, #130.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 668, #131.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 669, #132.

the human family to yourself through Jesus your Son, our Redeemer, with a new bond of love so tight that it can never be undone.”<sup>21</sup> This instruction helps place the congregation in a stance of receiving healing of sin personally and communally. “Because the humanity of Jesus is filial in every fiber of its being and in his love-inspired consent, it can make its own the least movements and deepest wounds of our humanity and fill them with the life of the father.”<sup>22</sup> “Conversion and reconciliation are inseparable, just as are the two aspects of sin that they heal: rejection and rupture...for He is in His person the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>23</sup>

### *The Eucharist Heals Division*

We desire unity and peace but often times it is allusive, in our families, our communities, our church, and between nations. Our meditation upon the Trinity in the celebration of the Eucharist reminds us we are created in the image and likeness of God. From the very start of our liturgy we sign ourselves “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Three persons, one God. A perfect relationship of knowing and loving (perichoresis) as individuals and a community of persons, a perfect balance of the one and the many. God gives himself to us as three persons and we return in the Holy Spirit, through Jesus because He lives in us, to the Father.<sup>24</sup> The Trinitarian mystery is expressed through the language of the Eucharistic Prayer and Collect Prayers. For example, in Eucharistic Prayer II: “You are indeed Holy, O Lord (Father), the fountain of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may

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<sup>21</sup> Roman Missal, p. 760, #1.

<sup>22</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 95.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>24</sup> Lectures, 2018.

become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>25</sup> Also, The Collect of the twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary time is a good representation of the structure of other Collects: “Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.”<sup>26</sup> Using these prayers as catechetical tools help us to remember the unity of the Trinity that dwells in us as the foundation of our unity.

We are also called to love our brothers and sisters in and through God’s love present in the Eucharist. God calls us together as an assembly, we do not constitute ourselves. God produces communion in us as our ecclesial identity. We receive a new dignity in the Eucharist to love with God’s own love.<sup>27</sup> We become a new communion, divinized, disciples transformed into apostles.<sup>28</sup> We have a common eternal destiny in Jesus, that other groups in society do not share, as we belong only to the Risen Christ.<sup>29</sup> During the liturgy of the Word a dialogue between us and God occurs in a privileged way in the church and becomes the model for dialogue in the world.<sup>30</sup> For us, the kingdom of God is a fact; community among men is an ideal.<sup>31</sup> Differences between people is a problem for us, not God. God’s gift is diversity, but the devil cuts away at unity through emphasizing the supreme value of rugged individualism.

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<sup>25</sup> Roman Missal, p. 646 #100-101.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 489.

<sup>27</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 73.

<sup>29</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>31</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 234.

Diversity crushed never achieves real unity, diversity as absolute value divides the human community.<sup>32</sup>

The Eucharistic Prayers and sign of peace help us heal divisions among people. In Eucharist Prayer for Reconciliation I: “Look kindly, most compassionate Father, on those you unite to yourself by the Sacrifice of your Son, and grant that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as they partake of this one Bread and one Chalice, they may be gathered into one Body in Christ, who heals every division.”<sup>33</sup> In Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation II there are numerous references to healing division. In the Preface, “For though the human race is divided by dissension and discord, yet we know that by testing us you change our hearts to prepare them for reconciliation. Even more, by your Spirit you move human hearts that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries join hands, and peoples seek to meet together. By the working of your power it comes about, O Lord, that hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness, and discord is changed to mutual respect.”<sup>34</sup> The prayer continues: “...you brought us back to be reconciled, O Lord, so that, converted at last to you, we might love one another through your Son...”<sup>35</sup> “...we offer you what you have bestowed on us, the Sacrifice of perfect reconciliation....graciously to endow us with his very Spirit, who takes away everything that estranges us from one another. May he make your Church a sign of unity and an instrument of your peace among all people.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Roman Missal, p. 763, #7.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 767-8, #1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 768, #2.

<sup>36</sup> Roman Missal, p. 770, #7.

Through ritual action we also reconcile with one another through the sign of peace before receiving communion fulfilling the command of Jesus. We are able to offer peace because we have received peace through the Risen Christ.<sup>37</sup> This symbolic reconciling should hopefully allow a model of how to work and live with our brothers and sisters especially those we have most disagreements. We cannot forgive as perfectly as God, but if we allow Grace to permeate our lives, God can help us forgive, reconcile, and heal divisions.

### *The Eucharist Heals Loss*

We acknowledge the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins. In his Resurrection our experience of death finds new meaning. “The death of Jesus was by its nature the death of death.” Jesus, in his Resurrection, passes beyond death.<sup>38</sup> In the Paschal Mystery the world is ontologically changed.<sup>39</sup> In our tradition the church has celebrated this victory over death from earliest times, praying for those who have died and asking for their prayers for us often times at gravesites. We pray for the repose of the soul of those who have died regularly during Funeral Rites, a Memorial Mass (perhaps on the anniversary of death), All Souls, in the prayers of the faithful, and through devotionals such as the Rosary. We also celebrate the victory over death in Jesus in every Eucharistic Prayer. For example, in all of the Eucharistic Prayers there is some version of the following prayer: “Remember our brothers and sisters (they can be named), who have fallen asleep in the peace of your Christ, and all the dead, whose faith you alone have known. Admit them to rejoice in the light of your face, and in the resurrection give them the

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<sup>37</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 122.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>39</sup> Lectures, 2018.

fullness of life.”<sup>40</sup> The Eucharist fills us with hope as the Holy Spirit descends from the future and delivers to the present our eternal destiny.<sup>41</sup>

In the Eucharist we can also find meaning and hope in other forms of loss: divorce, sickness, work, ruptures in relationships, etc. We believe that through the darkness of death the Holy Spirit can work and triumph by God’s plan of salvation if we unite our experience with the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. Even in the midst of loss we are not alone, God and God’s people are with us to provide healing and meaning as we move forward in life. We are lifted up. Even in the midst of our loss, God continues to use us for the building of His Kingdom.

### *The Eucharist Heals Depression*

Pastorally we encounter many who are depressed, weary, anxious, lonely, suffering from more severe mental illnesses and many of these hurts a manifestation of some core wounds. “At the core of every human event, at the bottom of every human heart, there is a night of death and rupture, of non-meaning and absence, human nature cannot dissipate this night.”<sup>42</sup> For many the sacraments of healing through Anointing of the Sick and Confession bring great solace. It is helpful to be reminded that every liturgy of the Eucharist is the celebration of the Father’s joy and every mass is a new beginning.<sup>43</sup> Our soul can echo Galatians 2:20 “yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me...”

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<sup>40</sup> Roman Missal, p. 791, #7.

<sup>41</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 50.

<sup>43</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 65.

Access to this healing from depression can occur perhaps through sharing a kind and uplifting greeting with a fellow member of the parish before mass. Lift up your heart again through an opening song making us one breath and voice of God's people. Join in the praise and thanksgiving to God for what He has already done in the Gloria and the Alleluia before the Gospel. Be consoled again by the promises present in the Word of God proclaimed to the community. The event character of the Word makes the reality present again of God's action as we acknowledge Jesus as the climax of the Word.<sup>44</sup> Allow the homily to bring God's healing Word here and now. Allow the church to pray for you in the prayers of the faithful and requesting the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints in every Eucharistic Prayer: "May he make of us an eternal offering to you, so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect, especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of god, with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs and with all the Saints, on whose constant intercession in your presence we rely for unfailing help."<sup>45</sup> Allow the Lord to care for you as you receive the Eucharist acknowledging the personal encounter with the Risen Jesus through the gift of relationship. Name your wounds, bring them to Jesus in the Eucharist, raise your heart to the Lord in hope, He is with you.

### *The Eucharist Heals Apathy*

After we receive the final blessing we hear a version of our great commissioning: "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."<sup>46</sup> "The gift to us of God's ever faithful love must be

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<sup>44</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Missal, p. 653, #113.

<sup>46</sup> Roman Missal, p. 673, #144.

answered by an authentic life of the charity that the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts.”<sup>47</sup>

Although apathy, discouragement, and frustration can arise, our reception of the Eucharist gives us a renewed and clear purpose to bring about the Kingdom of God in the world. We are made sons and daughters of God in order that He may send us into this world as He himself was sent by the Father.<sup>48</sup>

The Eucharistic celebration acknowledges the movement of God towards the world and the world’s return to God. As stewards of creation we bring the world back to Jesus through our prayers. Our celebration simultaneously frees us from history by its eschatological promises and compels us to help history in our day to day life. God’s love continues to enter the world through us.<sup>49</sup> As various Saints in our tradition have taught, in the Eucharist we become what we consume, the Body of Christ for one another.

The Readings, Homily, creed, and petitions all provide us with a means to renew our mission. Symbolically we are reconnected with our mission to serve one another by the collection and bringing up of the gifts. The simple act of bringing bread and wine unites our work and all of creation through the dignity of the incarnation and the sacrifice of Jesus. Grapes and wheat are a gift from God but through collaboration with our work they are made into bread and wine, placed upon the altar to represent our work and our world.<sup>50</sup> The priest says: “pray brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the

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<sup>47</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 157.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>49</sup> Lectures, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Lectures, 2018.

almighty Father.”<sup>51</sup> The offerings of our lives are transformed through Jesus and given back to us as divine life.

Many of the prayers after communion echo our common mission such as the Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time: “We have partaken of the gifts of this sacred mystery, humbly imploring, O Lord, that what your Son commanded us to do in memory of him may bring us growth in charity. Through Christ our Lord.”<sup>52</sup> Lastly, expressing our commitment to live the social teachings of the church, Eucharistic Prayer IV for use in masses for various needs says: “Open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters; inspire in us words and actions to comfort those who labor and are burdened. Make us serve them truly, after the example of Christ and at his command. And may your Church stand as a living witness to truth and freedom, to peace and justice, that all people may be raised up to a new hope.”<sup>53</sup> We unite ourselves so close with Jesus that we offer our lives in sacrifice as well for the good of others “this is my body, my blood...my entire self” given up for you.

### *Conclusion*

God is not limited to the Eucharist to bring about healing in our lives. The Lord can work through other Sacraments, nature, family, friends, intellectual reasoning, and counseling, just to name a few. However, in the Eucharist God offers us a privileged encounter with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Eucharist, God provides a horizonless space for Jesus who is the Lord of our lives. In the Eucharistic liturgy “the spirit opens our eyes in order that we may recognize

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<sup>51</sup> Roman Missal, p. 530, #29.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 493.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 796, #7.

the Lord; he gathers up our hearts so that they may receive the Word; he intensifies our hunger so that we may be filled with the Bread of Life; he makes us die to ourselves so that we may rise with Christ; he becomes our joy so that we may become the Father's joy; he breathes through us so that we may give life to our brothers and sisters."<sup>54</sup> If we welcome the Risen Jesus in our minds and hearts through the Eucharist he can heal us from sin, division, loss, depression, and apathy. And as we receive the Body and Blood of Christ we say "Amen!"

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<sup>54</sup> Corbon, *Wellspring*, 147.

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