

## Session B—Morning of the Second Day

### Second Talk

#### Important Information for the Speaker

The first talk, Session A, was introductory. The substantively pastoral teaching begins here with a truth that all the priests should already have at least a vague understanding of, namely, that divine grace is the Trinity really living in us. To be in the state of grace is to share the infinitely glorious life of the Trinity itself. We have the very glory in us that Jesus received from the Father (Jn 17:22).

However, though we shouldn't say this explicitly, even priests who have a deep theological grasp of this truth will probably not understand its crucial significance for the spiritual life of Christians according to Scripture. If they did, that truth would have a much greater prominence in their ministry than it now has (see the evidence in the Appendix to this talk). The glory of the Trinity living in them is not high enough in Catholics' consciousness to make them sufficiently eager and joyful in withstanding their anti-Christian environments.

(If the team members themselves have not yet recognized how drastically underappreciated the pastoral importance of the divine indwelling is today, they should read and discuss the evidence in the Appendix to this talk, following the "Explanation of the Outline.")

The relationship of the second day's talks to the overall goals of the retreat is twofold. First, living Christianity joyfully in a world of suffering, and now a world that is increasingly hostile to Christianity, requires appreciating how "surpassingly, inexpressibly" (2 Co 9:14-15) great the Great News (recommended as a more accurate translation than "Good News") really is.

This talk gives one reason the Great News is great: We share God's own infinitely glorious life. The third and fourth talks give another reason why the Great News is so great: Divine life is an absolutely free gift we do not have to earn; and the dispositions for receiving and persevering in the free Gift of God are very simple and uncomplicated (though not necessarily easy). The basic dispositions are ongoing sincere repentance (intention to do God's will) and personal belief in Jesus as our Savior (faith that Jesus took our personal guilt on himself and that he will accomplish our reformed intentions in us). The ninth talk gives one more reason, which is consequent on the first two: The Great News is great because it gives us the glorious privilege of helping others receive infinite life.

The second way this talk is related to the overall goals of the retreat is that it begins to show pastors how the apostles exercised their pastoral ministry. The speakers should NOT repeat to the priests the following statement that has been made by a sincere and practicing Catholic: "If the apostles had pastored the way pastors do today, Christianity would not have survived." (Saying that to priests could be offensive and certainly would be unfair since, though that statement may be true, the problem is not in general the fault of individual pastors but of unintentional omissions in their training due to understandable historical conditions. See the Introduction to this manual and the "Explanation of the Outline" for the first talk.) But by showing the principles on which the apostles founded their pastoral ministry, priests should be able to see for themselves, without our risking any offense to them, how their ministries differ from the apostles' (and from Jesus').

The material covered in this talk is even more important for disposing some priests to receive the subsequent talks than is the material in the first talk. Through no fault of their own, this may be the first time some of the retreatants have appreciated the true dignity of their ministerial priesthood by understanding it from the viewpoint of Christianity's essence. But if all the retreatants are not aware of these points before the subsequent talks, those talks will not be sufficiently beneficial to their pastoring. And for most of the retreatants, this retreat will be the first time they have learned at least some of these things.

This is a 40-minute talk.

### Goals

To ensure that pastors understand that:

- In order to have a strong Christian life, Catholics need to appreciate the inexpressibly surpassing (see 2 Co 9:14–15) “Gift of God”; (Jn 4:10; Ac 8:20; Rm 6:23; Heb 6:1-6) that they have received: divine life.
- To truly appreciate the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Church's life, Catholics must first appreciate much better than they now do the prior reality of the Trinity's truly dwelling in them and of Jesus' identification with his communal body (recommended substitute for “mystical body”), the Church.
- The reality of the Trinity's living in us is woefully underappreciated today.
- To appreciate their own way of being other Christs through ordination and their way of acting in the person of Christ with respect to headship in Christ's community, priests need to understand that their being other Christs through baptismal grace and their participating in Christ's personal life of worshiping the Father through their royal priesthood are infinitely more important and glorious.

### Checklist for Speaker

To achieve these goals, the speaker should ask himself: As a result of my talk, how well will the retreatants appreciate Catholics' need to grasp the following points, and how well will the retreatants understand how to present these points?

1. Receiving divine grace, “the Gift of God,” is infinitely more important than anything else that will happen to us before death.
2. Human beings living the Trinity's own glorious life is what Christianity is, its essence.
3. The apostles' pastoral ministry shows that all Catholics need an appreciation of the real indwelling of the Trinity, the Gift of God, as an inspiration for living the Christian life.
4. Today Catholics' appreciation of the Gift of God is woefully weak: They think grace is a white mark on the soul; it starts as something small; God is present in all people, not just Christians; God is just present “in our hearts” and so subjectively; all people, not just Christians, are God's children and he their Father; you don't have to be explicitly

Christian to be saved. And some Catholics even think God cannot condemn at all.

5. God was free to create history totally differently and to save us without the present Church structure and sacramental system---but not without our having the Trinity's life, Christianity's essence.
6. Neither ordination, the liturgy, nor the Eucharist can be appreciated except in the light of the Trinity's life really lived in individuals and among brother and sister Christians.
7. The Eucharist is incomparably the greatest mode of Jesus' presence; his dwelling within us is incomparably the most important mode to us and to him.
8. The liturgy is the highest way we live the Trinity's life. The Trinity's life is the Church's life, the life of which the liturgy is the source and summit.
9. Since it is the living out of divine grace, the royal priesthood presbyters acquired at baptism is infinitely more important and glorious than their ministerial priesthood.
10. Acting *in persona Christi CAPITIS* means sharing in his social role as head of his community. But being living members of the community is infinitely more important than our social role in the community. Living in grace means sharing in the Son's personal life of worshiping of the Father.
11. Jesus' communal body is another more important and fundamental way he is present. Without it neither the institutional Church nor the sacerdotal sacraments could exist.

If any of the points in this checklist are things the speaker does not wish to include in his talk, for the sake of teamwork the speaker should (1) inform the rest of his team of the specific points he does not wish to cover (2) inform the rest of the team what he plans to do instead, and (3) get the consensus of the team for his plan.

If there is a consensus about not covering those points from the checklist, the team can do one of two things instead. (1) They can agree to cover the points in other talks and work out which talks will cover them and how. (2) They can agree not to cover the points at all, since the checklist is not infallible. But before choosing (2) each member of the team should read the paragraphs in the "Explanation of the Outline" and in the Appendix that explain those points and why they were considered pastorally important in the first place.

So checklist points should be deleted from the retreat only if the entire team understands why they were originally considered important from a pastoral point of view, whether or not they are important from any other point of view. The reason why they were included in the first place *may not always be obvious*, especially to alumni of post-Trent seminaries. For example, the reason may concern cultural conditions unique to us but so prevalent that we hardly notice them. (See, for example, the discussion of the phrase "children of God" in Section II.5 of the "Expanded Outline" and the "Explanation of the Outline.")

Since the team's discernment of whether to delete a checklist point, and what to cover instead, will take time, a speaker who does not wish to include a checklist point should give the rest of the team ample advance notice.

## Brief Outline

- I. Scripture shows that Catholic spirituality depends on an appreciation of the glorious reality of the Trinity really dwelling in us and giving us their own life.
- II. Pastors need to see how woefully weak Catholics' appreciation of the "surpassing," "inexpressible" Gift of God is at the pastoral, as opposed to the theological, level today.
- III. Pastors need to know the pedagogical priority the real indwelling of the Trinity has relative to other Christian truths.
- IV. To adequately appreciate the Eucharist, Catholics need to be clear about the relation between Jesus' real presence in us through grace and his real presence in the Eucharist.
- V. For their ministry and their own spirituality, priests need to be clear about the relation of the awesome dignity they acquired at ordination to that which they acquired at baptism.
- VI. Christ's communal body is another way he is really present that is higher in the hierarchy of truths than the Church's institutional structure and sacramental system.
- VII. The connection to the next talk: Appreciation of the real indwelling of Christ in us and of us in him is as much a gift as are those indwellings themselves. We do not get that appreciation just by working at it.

## Expanded Outline

- I. Scripture shows that Catholic spirituality depends on an appreciation of the glorious reality of the Trinity really dwelling in us and giving us their own life.
  - A. At baptism we receive God's own infinite, divine life and glory.
    1. The speaker should quote Jn 4:10: "If you knew the Gift of God, . . . you would have asked . . . , and he [Jesus] would have given you living water."
    2. John later describes the Gift of God as the Holy Spirit (7:38–39) but adds that the Spirit makes us aware that we are united with the whole Trinity. The speaker should quote:
      - a. In that day [the day when we receive "another Paraclete"; Jn 14:16, NAB], you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (Jn 14:20)
      - b. If anyone loves me, . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (Jn 14:23)
    3. St. Paul gives thanks for the "inexpressible" Gift of God and identifies it with the "surpassing grace of God" in us (2 Co 9:14, 15). Second Peter says that Christians "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 P 1:4). The *Catechism* quotes the patristic proclamation that by grace we are "divinized" (1988; and see 460).

- B. The Trinity’s real dwelling within us gives us the same glory Jesus and the Father have. The speaker should quote:
1. “The glory which you have given me, I have given to them, . . . I in them and you in me” (Jn 17:22–23). The speaker may also wish to quote, “Those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rm 8:30).
  2. The speaker may also point out that Paul sees no difference between “his (God’s) glory” and “the glory of his grace,” when Paul says we are “destined . . .” to “the praise the glory of his grace” and “destined . . . to live for the praise of his glory” (Ep 1:5–6, 12).
- C. Understanding the divine indwelling theologically is not enough. Pastors need to understand how important an appreciation of that reality is for the spiritual life.
1. Scripture and tradition consider our appreciation of the infinite life dwelling in us a basic motivator for Christian behavior. Without that appreciation, Catholics lack a necessary condition for fully yielding to God’s work within them.
    - a. The speaker should hand out and read the “God’s Life in Us” quotes in “Usable Quotes.” He should start with the reason Paul tells the Corinthians that the Jerusalem Christians “long for you and pray for you,” namely, “because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!” (2 Co 9:14–15).
    - b. The fourth gospel considers Christians’ love for fellow Christians the purpose of Jesus’ giving us his own glory. The speaker should quote,
 

I have given them the glory you gave me  
that they may be one, as we are one—  
I living in them, you living in me—  
that their unity may be complete. (Jn 17:22–23, NAB)
    - c. The pastors who wrote the epistles knew they should keep reminding Christians of the glorious dignity they have received. That was an integral part of their pastoral wisdom.
- D. To be strong Christians in hostile environments, Catholics need to know much more than that the state of grace is a ticket out of hell and into heaven. They need to know that being in grace is infinitely more important than anything else that can possibly occur before death.
1. There is an infinite distance between those who have the life of the Trinity (by baptism of water or desire) and those who do not. There is only a finite distance between the greatest sinner who repents and the greatest saint.

2. Every other “gift from God” in creation, everything in physical nature and in the Church, has the sole purpose of our preservation and perfection in the life of the Trinity.
- E. The preceding Scripture quotes show *that* an appreciation of the Trinity’s indwelling is crucial to the spiritual life. Pastors also need to understand *why*.
1. Our love of anything is based on our knowledge of it. Our knowledge of God is based on his revealing his infinite love for us. We know how great his love is by “knowing the Gift of God” (see Jn 4:10).
  2. God’s love infinitely exceeds our knowledge. But the above Scripture quotes promise us sufficient understanding to inspire us.
- II. Pastors need to see how woefully weak Catholics’ appreciation of the “surpassing,” “inexpressible” Gift of God is at the pastoral, as opposed to the theological, level today.
- A. In the formation Catholics have received, there are many serious obstacles to appreciating the indwelling of the Trinity. The result is that Catholics have only the vaguest idea of what they should be rejoicing in. Some of the obstacles:
1. Many think of “the state of grace” as a white mark replacing a black one on the soul, or as a ticket into the next life with no particular bearing on this life.
  2. Since we grow in grace, many think it starts out as something small. But infinitely glorious life is in us from the moment we receive grace.
    - a. We do grow in grace, but so did Jesus, not only “before . . . men” but also “before God” (Lk 2:52; NAB), and he always had the whole Trinity dwelling in him. “Participating” in divine life cannot mean having only “part” of it. The Trinity does not have parts.
    - b. Growth means that the way the Trinity lives their life in us develops. But it is always the whole Trinity in us causing the development
  3. Catholics are told, correctly, that God is in all people. But only Christians have the Trinity’s life as their own life; only acts of Christians can also be acts of the Trinity’s own life.
 

To struggle to live differently from everyone else, Catholics need to know the infinite distance between their life and everyone else’s.
  4. Catholics are often told that Christ is present “in our hearts,” which causes many to think his presence is merely subjective.
    - a. “In our hearts” can describe the subjective way our families are in our hearts when we are apart. But God’s glory is in us the way it was in Jesus’ humanity before the Transfiguration and

Resurrection.

- b. Rather than being subjective, grace causes us to be existentially re-created, to be new creatures. Creation failed the first time but starts over in us.
  - c. Other true descriptions that are too vague to be pastorally effective without more explanation are “Jesus is in our lives” or “Jesus is with us.”
5. All people, not just Christians, are now called “children of God,” undercutting Scripture’s reason for saying that we are children of God and for calling God “our Father.”
- a. In an obvious and important way that Scripture mentions once (Ac 17:28–29), all people are God’s children. But otherwise Scripture uses the phrases “children of God” and “our Father” to remind us of the infinitely more important, but not at all obvious, *difference* between Christians and nonChristians.
  - b. Without appreciating that nonobvious difference, Catholics can’t be adequately inspired to struggle to live differently from others.
6. Today Catholics are told, correctly, that you don’t have to be visibly Christian to be saved. So they need an explanation of why it is so important to be Christian.
- a. Theologically, this retreat does not deny the explanation that salvation is more secure for Christians. But pastorally that can cause the *appearance* that God unjustly makes salvation harder for some.
  - b. Later the retreat will offer an underappreciated explanation that is at least as important as, but can be more inspiring than, the above.
7. Many Catholics believe a loving God cannot condemn. The retreat will later discuss how to explain this without undue reliance on fear as a spiritual motive. But pastors need to be reminded here that they cannot afford to be naive about this spiritually deadly fallacy.
- B. Such is the pastoral state of the Church now, and priests need to be absolutely realistic about it. Communicating Christianity’s essence is not easy today. What the seminary taught priests they would be expected to do is no longer adequate.
- 1. Due to all these obstacles, the retreat urges using the language of the Trinity’s real indwelling and of our really living the Trinity’s life to communicate the *sine qua non* reality that the first Christian pastors tried to communicate in terms that so often are drastically watered down or misunderstood today.

2. Living the life of the Trinity is a specifically and unambiguously Christian concept. That is what our pastoral ministry needs, since the awesome reality that needs to be appreciated is specifically Christian.
  3. The first Christian pastors knew they had to regularly reinforce their converts' appreciation of the infinitely great Gift of God.
- III. Pastors need to know the pedagogical priority the real indwelling of the Trinity has relative to other Christian truths.
- A. After the truths of God's existence, his being a family of persons, his creation of us and his gift of divine life, the most important thing we need to know is that *we are in a state of sin that requires divine intervention*.
    1. We are in a state of sin, which is the loss of divine life.
    2. Redemption is the restoration of divine life. Having the Trinity's life is what salvation is, its essence. God was free to create history totally differently and to save us without the present Church structure and sacramental system. He could not have saved us without giving us divine life, *by definition*. That is the priority of the Trinity's indwelling in the hierarchy of truths.
    3. If God's mercy must be consistent with his justice and justice requires infinite atonement by a human being, he could not save us unless he became man. Still, he could have saved us without the Church and sacraments he actually chose, but not without giving us divine life.
  - B. We can now mention another serious obstacle to appreciating the Gift of God, one that all Catholics do not need to know but that all priests should know: The Gift of God is not something distinctively Catholic; we share it with all true Christians.
    1. Our post-Reformation focus on the specifically Catholic can make the specifically Catholic seem more important than the specifically Christian. Popes have often warned against this error. The speaker should quote:
      - a. Blessed Pope John XXIII: "What unites us [Catholic and nonCatholic Christians] is much greater than what divides us."<sup>1</sup>
      - b. Blessed Pope John Paul II: "How little divides them [Catholic and nonCatholic Christians] in comparison to what unites them."<sup>2</sup>
    2. By "greater" John XXIII must mean of greater *importance*. Not all Christians share the greatest sacrament, but most share the most important one.
  - C. Jesus chose to use visible instruments as means to divine life. But since it is humanly easier to focus on the visible than the invisible, it is easier to focus on

the means than the end. So pastoral ministry must regularly reinforce our appreciation of Christianity's invisible essence.

IV. To adequately appreciate the Eucharist, Catholics need to be clear about the relation between Jesus' real presence in us through grace and his real presence in the Eucharist.

A. The Eucharist is incomparably the greatest sacrament; baptism, incomparably the most important. Likewise, though the Eucharist is incomparably the greatest mode of Jesus' presence, grace is incomparably the most important mode.

1. One way of seeing that the Eucharist is the greatest mode of his presence: You can point to the host and cup and say, "That *IS* God." You cannot say that of any other person or thing, even people in grace.
2. Also, after the consecration, you can *worship* the host and the liquid. You cannot worship any other physical thing.
3. But grace is the presence most important, not only to us but to Jesus. He would rather be in us than in every tabernacle in the world. The speaker should quote St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

Our Lord does not come down from Heaven everyday to lie in a golden ciborium. He comes to find another heaven which is infinitely dearer to him—the heaven of our souls, created in His Image, the living temples of the Adorable Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

B. The highest way we live the Trinity's life is participation in the Mass, the source and summit of the Church's life. But the Church's life is the Trinity's life lived in and among Christians.

1. As the life of a family of persons, the Trinity's life is lived between Christians. The speaker should again quote, "The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one" (Jn 17:22–23).
2. For what purpose do we have the Trinity's glory? That we may be one as the Father and Son are. How are they one? By perfect familial love: "In the unity of the Holy Spirit."
3. We cannot appreciate what it is for the Mass to be the source and summit of the Church's life unless we know that the Church's life is the Trinity's life.

The Mass is the source of the Church's life because it contains the reality of the acts of Jesus that gained divine life for us. And the Mass is the summit of the life that we must be already living in order to fully participate in the Mass by receiving the Eucharist.

4. The retreat will later explain that, since God is a family of persons, the

Mass should be the highest act of Christians striving to live as a community of brothers and sisters.

- V. For their ministry and their own spirituality, priests need to be clear about the relation of the awesome dignity they acquired at ordination to that which they acquired at baptism.
- A. Presbyters' royal priesthood is infinitely greater and more glorious than their presbyterate; for the royal priesthood is simply the living out of the life of grace.
1. Our main joy should come from our Christianity, not our specific ministry. The speaker should quote, "Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Lk 10:20).
  2. Jesus was not saying that we should take no joy in our ministries but that nothing compares with the joy we should have from "knowing the Gift of God."
- B. The effects of ordination are described, correctly, as our being incorporated into Christ, becoming another Christ, being configured to Christ, and being enabled to act in the very person of Christ.
1. But it should be axiomatic that those descriptions are true in an infinitely greater and more glorious sense of all Christians than of presbyters. Before death, nothing more glorious or important can happen to us than being in grace.
  2. That those descriptions are now more often used of presbyters than of Christians in general is more proof of how inadequate our appreciation of the Gift of God is. We cannot appreciate a presbyter's identification with Christ except by its sole purpose of restoring, preserving and perfecting that more important identification.
- C. Everyone in grace is united to the person of Christ in the infinitely most important sense.
1. This does not diminish the presbyter's dignity. He has incomparably more dignity because he can give the greatest possible gift than if he could only give a lesser gift.
  2. Presbyters act *in persona Christi CAPITIS*, in the social role of headship, the role that Jesus' divine personhood required him alone to have in his community. But being a living member of Christ's community is infinitely more important than the social role we have in it.

The Father's role is primary in the Trinitarian community, and parents have the role of headship in the family. But the equality of a society's members as persons is more important than their unequal social roles.

3. Presbyters do not just have more of Christ's powers; they are united to his Person in a new way. But when a presbyter in mortal sin offers Mass *in persona Christi capitis*, he is not participating personally, as the laity may be, in the Son's own personal act of worshiping the Father.
4. The way presbyters are permanently configured to Christ is dependent on the way baptism permanently configures all Christians to Christ.
  - a. Presbyters can receive their social role in Christ's body only if they are permanently marked as members of his communal body at baptism.
  - b. Through presbyters the Church could restore grace even if all Christians were in mortal sin. But presbyters can only restore to grace those permanently marked as members of Christ's body by baptism.

VI. Christ's communal body is another way he is really present that is higher in the hierarchy of truths than the Church's institutional structure and sacramental system.

A. Scripture and tradition teach that Jesus' communal body, the Church, is his way of continuing to be humanly present and acting in the world.

We suggest saying "communal body" since "mystical," which was originally used of the Eucharistic presence, can be mistaken for "ethereal." "Comprehensive body" could also be used, as suggested by "the fulness of him who fills all in all" (Ep 1:23).

B. The Eucharist is always the greatest mode of Christ's presence, but there could be no ordination of Eucharistic celebrants if Christ's communal body did not exist first.

C. Just as Christ could not save us without divinizing grace, he could not save us without making us his communal body. But he could have saved us without the institutional characteristics the Church now has.

1. We could not be saved just as separate individuals. The Trinity is a family; we cannot have their life without becoming each other's divine siblings.
2. Christians are not just united in Christ's humanity. By sharing the life of the Trinity, we share his divine sonship. He who is truly in us is, and we in him, is the same person who is also truly "in my Father" (Jn 14:20).

VII. The connection to the next talk: Appreciation of the real indwelling of Christ in us and of us in him is as much a gift as those indwellings themselves. We do not get that appreciation just by working at it.

A. Preaching the greatness of the Great News is necessary in order for Catholics to appreciate it, but it is not sufficient.

- B. In fact, there are two dispositions needed for the Christian life that are more fundamental than an appreciation of the Gift of God, because they are the way Catholics must dispose themselves to receive both the Gift of God and adequate appreciation of it. The next talk discusses those more fundamental dispositions.

### Explanation of the Outline:

#### Why These Points Are Important for Pastors to Know and for This Retreat to Teach

##### Section I.

The speaker should quote Jn 4:10:

If you knew the gift of God, . . . you would have asked him [Jesus], and he would have given you living water.

What is the Gift of God? Scripture and tradition describe it in several different ways. The fourth Gospel later identifies the Gift of God with the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:38–39). But it also says that receiving the Spirit makes us aware that we are united with the other persons of the Trinity:

In that day [the day when we receive “another Paraclete,” Jn, 14:16, NAB], you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (Jn 14:20)

And it says that by living the life of the Spirit, we receive the whole Trinity:

If [anyone] loves me, . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (Jn 14:23)

So receiving the Gift of God means that the Holy Trinity is really dwelling in us and giving us its life as our life.<sup>4</sup>

St. Paul describes the Gift of God as “inexpressible” and identifies it with the “surpassing grace of God in us” (2 Co 9:14–15). Second Peter says that Christians “become partakers of the divine nature” (1:4). The *Catechism* quotes St. Athanasius in saying that by grace we are “divinized” (1988, and see 460).

To have the Trinity in us is to have the same glory that Jesus and the Father have. “The glory which you have given me, I have given to them . . . I in them and you in me” (Jn 17:22–23). Paul tells us, “Those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rm 8:30). And Paul says we are “destined . . . to the praise of his glorious grace” in the same breath that he says we are “destined . . . to live for the praise of his glory” (Ep 1:5–6, 12).

Next this talk discusses the spiritual significance of that theological truth. Scripture and tradition make our appreciation of the infinite life dwelling in us a basic motivator for Christian behavior. Without the inspiration that an appreciation of the Trinity’s indwelling gives us, our Christian behavior and growth will be seriously stunted.

We know that from the first Christian pastors. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that the Jerusalem Christians’ motive for loving the Corinthians is that they appreciate their

inexpressibly surpassing dignity due to the grace of God in them. The speaker should read aloud:

They long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you.  
Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (2 Co 9:14–15)

Paul does not stop there. He repeatedly motivates the Corinthians by appealing to God's real presence in them. (The speaker should read the first of the following quotes and hand out copies of all these quotes from the Corinthians epistles. The goal is to show that this pastoral strategy was no mere passing thought on Paul's part.)

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. . . . Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! (2 Co 13:5; see Jn 14:20, 23; Ga 2:20; 2 P 1:4)

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (1 Co 3:16)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? (1 Co 6:19)

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! (1 Co 6:15)

John's Gospel also makes our sharing of God's glory the motive for Christian behavior:

I have given them the glory you gave me  
that they may be one, as we are one—  
I living in them, you living in me—  
that their unity may be complete. (Jn 17:22–23, NAB)

For what purpose did Jesus give us his own glory? That we may love one another so much that we are one as he and the Father are one. How are Jesus and the Father one? By mere agreement in doctrine? No. They are a family united by an infinite bond of love for one another. So John and Paul cite exactly the same motive, namely, the indwelling of God's glory, for Christians to love each other as Jesus loves them.

And how often do almost all of the epistles remind us of the glorious dignity we have as Christians? The first pastors of the Church assumed that Christians needed to be reminded of that, and they never tired of talking about it. Don't forget, those men were writing pastoral documents, documents for spiritual formation. They were making judgments about what the first converts needed to be reminded of for the sake of their spiritual lives.

To be motivated to be strong, joyful Christians in their hostile environments, Catholics need to know that the state of grace is much more than a ticket out of hell and into heaven. They need to know that the state of grace is infinitely more important than anything that can possibly happen to anyone before death. The only thing comparable in importance to receiving the divine indwelling in baptism or reconciliation is persevering in it until death.

Also, Catholics need to know clearly and firmly that there is an infinite distance between those who have the Trinity's life, by baptism of water or desire (and by reconciliation when needed), and those who do not. In contrast, there are only finite differences between those who

are living divine life at different levels of sanctity. The baptized baby has been recreated with a glory that is infinitely beyond anything in the unbaptized baby lying next to her. But there is only a finite distance in glory between the greatest saint and a Christian who commits every conceivable venial sin. As the poet Peguy said, “Lord, grant me the lowest place in Purgatory.”

Likewise, there will be a finite distance between our stations in heaven, but there will be an infinite distance between those who are in heaven and those who are not. That infinite distance will be a continuation of the difference at death between those who are living the life of the Trinity and those who are not. The real dwelling of the Trinity within us is the “one thing only [that] is required” (Lk 10:42); it is the meaning of human life.

Other things deserve to be called gifts of God, of course; in fact, *everything* is a gift from God. But Scripture can call the Trinity’s life “the Gift of God” because the preservation and perfection of the Trinity’s life in us is the sole ultimate purpose of absolutely every other gift in the entire universe, including physical nature, the institutional Church, confirmation, marriage, ordination, and the Eucharist.

The Scripture citations from Paul and John in Section I of the outline should convince pastors *that* an appreciative awareness of the divine indwelling is crucial to Catholic spirituality. In addition, we have to explain to pastors *why* it is so important to Catholic spirituality. The following reflection is meant to help both the retreatants *and the team* understand why:

Love follows knowledge. We have to have at least some knowledge of a thing to love it; we cannot love something of which we are completely ignorant. So to love God we have to know him, no matter how imperfectly. And we know God to the extent that we know, no matter how imperfectly, his love for us.

That is how God reveals himself to us by revealing his love to us; for that love is what God is, love. We know God’s love for us to the extent that we know how great his generosity to us is. That is how Abraham, Moses, and Jesus’ disciples encountered God: by God’s free generosity of offering himself to them.

Of course, God’s love infinitely exceeds any idea we have of it. But Scripture and Tradition promise us a sufficiently appreciative awareness of what “the Gift of God,” the Trinity itself, is: “If you knew the Gift of God” (Jn 4:10); “Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?” (2 Co 13:5, NAB); “They long for you . . ., because of the surpassing grace of God in you” (2 Co 9:14). And so on.

The basis of our love of God is our awareness of God and who he is. That awareness is based on his revelation of his unlimited love for us. He reveals his unlimited love for us by letting us “know the Gift of God.” So the basis of our love for God must be our appreciation of the awesome gift that reveals the awesomeness of his love for us.

The next reflection gets into a level of detail that should NOT be brought into the retreat unless necessary to answer a question raised by a retreatant, but this reflection *is* important for all the team members to understand:

The retreat’s first talk introduced certain themes that will come up repeatedly indifferent talks. One of those themes is the distinction between the viewpoint of theology, which necessarily governs so much of priestly training, and the viewpoint of spirituality, living

the Christian life, which should be the dominant viewpoint of priests' pastoral ministries.

The first talk illustrated this distinction by the historical fact that, while the Church has always had the same *doctrine* of the Eucharist, at different times we have drawn *opposite pastoral conclusions* from that doctrine concerning the frequency of reception of the Eucharist. That illustration was used because it is so obvious, and it will come up again on the retreat.

However, there are less obvious, though no less important, instances of the distinction between the viewpoints of theology and spirituality. The relation between the Holy Spirit and sanctifying grace is one of them, one that it is important for the team members to understand. Technical theology correctly differentiates the reception of the Holy Spirit from sanctifying grace, the indwelling of the entire Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of which sanctifying grace, an accidental formal cause, is the effect.

In speaking of "the Gift of God," however, Scripture does not consistently make that relationship clear. John 4:10; 7:38-39; Acts 8:20; and Second Timothy 1:6-7 seem to identify the Gift of God with the Spirit, without saying that what the Gift of God does for us is to put us in the state of grace. Second Corinthians 9:14-15 and Romans 6:23 seem to identify the Gift of God with the state of grace, without calling it an effect of the Spirit. And Hebrews 6:4-5 seems to distinguish "tasting the heavenly gift" from "becoming partakers of the Holy Spirit," as if the Spirit were distinct from the Gift of God.

The authors of Scripture, however, were not writing scientific theology. They certainly meant to be doctrinally accurate, but their primary purpose for writing was pastoral, not informational. They were concerned about the preservation and perfection of their readers' Christian spiritual lives. To live that life fully, most Christians will never need scientific knowledge of the distinction between the Holy Spirit and the state of grace or exegetical knowledge of whether "the Gift of God" means the same thing in every scriptural occurrence.

But living that life fully does require an appreciation of the infinitely glorious fact that we are living the Trinity's own life. The meager intellectual understanding of that fact that we are able to acquire in this life requires an elaborate multiplication of abstract distinctions and partial concepts. So unless we are very careful, that multitude can become intellectual trees keeping us from seeing the whole spiritual forest. That is the difference between the theological and spiritual points of view, which will come up repeatedly in this retreat.

The New Testament authors believed that their readers could "know the Gift of God" in the way that would inspire sanctity without knowing anything about technical theological distinctions. The important thing is that where the Spirit is present, he makes the Father and Son present also.

## Section II.

The next part of the talk discusses another thing pastors need to know: how woefully weak the appreciation of the glory of Trinitarian life is at the pastoral level, as opposed to the theological level, today.

The fact is that instead of having the kind of appreciation of God's indwelling that Paul and John wanted the first Christians to have, Catholics today have only the vaguest idea of what sharing the Trinity's life means. We cannot expect today's Catholics to be motivated to Christian behavior the way the early Christians were, until they "know the Gift of God" (Jn 4:10) much better than they do now.

The objective evidence presented in the Appendix to this talk is meant to demonstrate to the team just how drastic the under appreciation of "his glorious grace" (Ep 1:6) is in pastoral ministry today. But since the kind of evidence cited there would be very inappropriate to include in the retreat itself, the retreatants won't understand the depth of today's problem unless the speaker states each of the following points, spending enough time on each to unveil the problem.

In the pastoral ministry Catholics have received, there are many, many obstacles to truly appreciating what the Gift of God is. One obstacle is that, when they hear the words "sanctifying grace" or "the state of grace," many Catholics think of a white mark on their soul that replaces the black mark of mortal sin when they go to reconciliation. Or they think of it as a ticket out of hell and into heaven, and so as something that has no significance until the moment of death.

Another obstacle is that many Catholics, including priests, have come to the conclusion that, since we grow in grace, grace must begin in us as something small, rather than as something infinitely glorious that nothing else can compare with. We do grow in grace, but so did Jesus, "before God and before men" (Lk 2:52). That does not mean that the whole glory of the Trinity was not in him from the very beginning. It means that the way the Trinity lived in his human nature developed from one stage to another, but it was always the whole Trinity living in him and developing its life in him. Jesus' growth in spiritual life did not include, as ours does, repentance for his own sins. But it did grow by, for example, his identifying himself with the guilt of our sins at John's baptism of repentance, so that he could be the human offering God's justice demanded for sin ("to fulfill all righteousness" — Mt 3:15).

Like Jesus, we have the whole Trinity dwelling in us at baptism and as long as we are in grace; you can never have only a part of the Trinity. There are no parts in God's nature; so "sharing" or "participating" in it cannot mean having only a part of it. As in Jesus, the way the divine family lives its life in us develops, but that development concerns created effects of the uncreated Persons already living in us. If genuine, our most imperfect act of loving the Trinity for their own sake is infinitely greater than any merely natural act; a human act can merit eternal glory only because it is already a sharing in eternal glory.

Another obstacle to Catholics having an adequate appreciation of the glory they have received is their being told, correctly but without adequate explanation, that God is present in all people. Yes, God is present in them, but that does not mean that all people are living the very life of the Trinity. This is a place where a better understanding of everyday metaphysics (yes, there is such a thing) can improve our spiritual theology:

The Creator, and so the Trinity, is present and active in all creatures, and the Creator, and so the Trinity, is the primary cause of all the actions performed by creatures. But only in those who have been baptized (by water or desire) does he create activities—acts of faith, hope, and especially love—that are at the same time acts of the creature and acts of the Trinity's own life.

That is the theologically precise and all-important answer to the question, What is the

difference between the specific way God is present in Christians and the generic way he is present in all people? Only in those who are Christian, by water or desire, does the divine family cause its their own infinite life to be the creature's life. Those who have not yet received "the Gift of God" do not have the "surpassing," "inexpressible" (2 Co 9:14–15) privilege of living the Trinity's infinite life.

Another obstacle to Catholics having a sufficient appreciation of the divine indwelling is that it is often described as a vague presence "in our hearts." But ordinarily the presence of something "in our hearts" means a merely subjective presence, the way something we love is said to be present in our hearts when we are physically separated from it. For example, when parents are at work, their spouses and children are present in their minds and hearts. In the same way, a deceased person is said to "live" in the minds and hearts of his family and friends.

But the reality of the Trinity in us is anything but subjective. Because of it we are new creatures in an existential sense; we are existentially re-created and reborn. God's glory in us is not visible now, but it is existentially there. Likewise, it was existentially present in Jesus' human nature, even though it was not visible until the Transfiguration and the Resurrection.

Other common descriptions of the divine presence that are too vague to be pastorally effective without further explanation are "Jesus is in our lives" and "Jesus is with us."

There is another very serious obstacle to today's Catholics appreciating the divine indwelling in the way that the apostles knew was a foundational motivation for Christian behavior. Today everyone, not just the Christian, is said, correctly, to be a "child of God"; God is everyone's Father, not the just the Father of Christians. When you hear a politician, for instance, say that we are all children of God, you can be sure that he or she is not appealing just to Christian voters.

In an obviously important sense, everyone is a child of God. And the New Testament says that but only once (Ac 17:28–29). Everywhere else that the New Testament uses the phrase "children of God" or speaks of God as "Father," it is referring strictly to people who share the Trinity's life. For while the generic sense of "children of God" is something important and obvious, the specifically Christian sense is not obvious at all but is infinitely more important. That fact is why the apostles made the pastoral judgment to keep reminding their converts that they were children of God in a way that was infinitely more exalted than merely being human. The first Christian pastors knew they had to regularly reinforce their converts' appreciation of that reality.

But the pastoral effect of their constant reminders is almost the opposite of the effect those words have today. When the apostles used the words "children of God," they were reminding Christians of the infinite *difference* between themselves and "ordinary men" (1 Co 3:3). When we use those words, most of us think of our *sameness* with all people. But Christians alone are children of God in the sense that they are living the very life of God.

That is how serious the change of meaning for those terms is. When Catholics hear the Scriptures read, the very opposite of their meaning often comes across. And how is reminding Christians of their sameness with "ordinary men" supposed to inspire them to persevere in their struggle to live radically differently from all other people?

The apostles cited being a child of God in the Christian sense as a reason for hope and

joy beyond anything a non-Christian could experience. And the reason they tried to inspire that hope and joy was for the sake of their converts' perseverance and perfection in Christian behavior. The First Epistle of John explicitly connects appreciation of being a child of God, in the sense only true of Christians and not of "the world," with Christian hope and so with Christian behavior:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us  
in letting us be called children of God . . .  
The reason the world does not recognize us  
is that it never recognized the Son.  
Dearly beloved,  
we are God's children now;  
what we shall later be has not yet come to light.  
We know that when it comes to light  
we shall be like him,  
for we shall see him as he is.  
Everyone who has this hope based on him  
keeps himself pure as he is pure. (1 Jn 3:1-3, NAB)

Knowing that we are God's children in the specifically Christian sense should fill us with hope and joy. And that hope and joy should motivate us to keep ourselves "pure as he is pure."

Consider what the First Epistle of Peter is assuming when it says: "Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply" (1 P 3:15, NAB). The author is assuming that Christians' conduct will display such a hope that people will notice how happy they are and ask them why. Catholics today do not have a sufficient basis for hope and joy like that. And Catholics who may have been given a sufficient basis for it at some time in their past are not regularly reminded of it, as the epistles regularly reminded the first Christians. But Catholics today need to have that basis regularly reinforced by their pastors, since their environments constantly attack it.

The topic of hope brings up yet another obstacle to Catholics appreciating the incomparable greatness of the Gift of God sufficiently to support sanctity in today's hostile environments. Catholics are now told, correctly, that you do not have to be Christian to be saved. But then why be wholeheartedly committed to making all the sacrifices that truly devout Christianity requires in today's world?

One answer sometimes given is that being Christian makes one's salvation more secure. This retreat does not dispute that answer. But the speakers, though not necessarily the retreatants, should be aware that it can raise a *pastoral* problem of God's seeming to make it easier for some to be saved than others. People can wonder, for example, whether it is just for God to make salvation more secure for Christians than for those who never had the chance to hear of Jesus. And the question still remains whether the difference between being Christian and not being Christian is sufficiently inspiring to motivate Catholics to overcome all the temptations they face.

This retreat will later (the ninth talk, Session K) offer an additional, and pastorally more inspiring, reason for Catholics to be eager Christians, despite knowing that a person does not have to be visibly Christian to be saved. But for now it is enough for pastors to realize that this is another obstacle to devout spirituality that requires pastors to regularly reinforce the essential

difference between being and not being Christian: rebirth to infinite life in the Trinity's divine family.

Another obstacle to having a firm grasp of the glory of the Gift of God is the common belief that no one can be condemned by a loving God. Some and perhaps many Catholics believe not only that the possibility of salvation is open to all but also that actual salvation has to be universal. The retreat will address how pastors should handle that problem later (the ninth talk, Session K).

Such is the pastoral state of the Church today, and pastors need to be absolutely realistic about it. The first Christian pastors knew they had to regularly reinforce their converts' appreciation of the infinitely great Gift of God. But communicating the glory of being a Christian is not easy today. What the seminary taught priests they would be expected to do is no longer adequate.

Due to all these obstacles, the retreat urges using the language of the Trinity's real indwelling and of our really living the Trinity's life to communicate the *sine qua non* reality that the first Christian pastors tried to communicate in terms that so often are drastically watered down or misunderstood today. Living the life of the Trinity is a specifically and unambiguously Christian concept. Our pastoral ministry needs to convey the specific awesomeness of what it means to be Christian.

### Section III.

The next part of the talk discusses another thing pastors need to know: the pedagogical place of the real indwelling of the Trinity relative to other Christian truths.

After the truths of God's existence, his being a family of persons, his creation of us, and his gift of divine life, the most important thing we need to know is that *we are in a state of sin*, a state that requires divine intervention because we cannot redeem ourselves. Of what does sin deprive us? We have fallen away from participation in divine life. And what does redemption do for us? It restores us to participation in divine life. Living the life of the Trinity is what Christianity is, its very essence. And pastors need to know that. When we make any act of Christian love, we are really participating in Jesus' personal love of the Father.

That an appreciation of the reality of the Trinity in us is a necessary disposition for full cooperation with grace simply means that fully responding to grace presupposes an awareness of what the Christian life really is. That living the Trinity's glorious life is the essence of Christianity is a truth so crucial to our spirituality that we need to make it as clear to pastors as possible. So the speaker should explicitly point out the following, which will become a theme repeated in other talks on this retreat:

God created us by his free choice and could have freely chosen an entirely different history for the world. Infinite possibilities are open to an infinite God. And he could have chosen the same history with the exception of saving us differently—for example, without Jesus' suffering and death. In fact, there may actually exist another planet elsewhere in the universe that has an entirely different history and an entirely different plan of salvation from earth's. (The Church has not ruled out the existence of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe.)

Therefore, God could have saved us without the specific institutional structure and sacramental system that he chose for the Church. But what God could not have done is save us without letting us share his divine life. For living the life of the Trinity is what the essence of salvation is. The alternative would be a salvation as pictured in the old theory of Limbo, where unbaptized innocent children were supposed to go and where righteous souls who died before Jesus did go (First Peter 3:19-4:6), a state of “natural” happiness that would not include sharing God’s own infinite happiness.

The purpose of citing hypothetical possibilities about other histories is to highlight how important the real indwelling of the Trinity is in the hierarchy of Christian truths. It is higher than truths about the institutional structure of the Church and higher than the truth that the indwelling of the Trinity comes to us through the sacraments. Jesus could have saved us without establishing the Church’s specific institutional structure and sacramental system. He could not have saved us without giving us divine life, *by definition*, since living the life of the Triune God is what Christianity is.

Hypothetical possibilities about alternative histories can help us see this because, in actual historical fact and by God’s freely chosen design, that truth about the essence of being Christian is embedded among many other truths that, *de facto*, are important, truths that are even “essential” to Christianity in the sense of being necessary for salvation. Given the history God has actually chosen for human salvation, the Church’s institutional structure is in fact necessary for salvation; we cannot choose to change the basic structure of the Church or the sacramental system. So it is not always easy to see the forest for the trees.

But as important as the Church’s structure is, the sense in which it is “essential” to salvation is subordinate to the sense in which divine life, not the Church’s structure, is salvation’s essence. Our beliefs about the Church’s structure and sacramental system are among the main things that divide Catholics from other Christians; and Popes Blessed John XXIII and Blessed John Paul II repeatedly told us that what divides us from other Christians is subordinate to what unites us:

What unites us [Catholic and nonCatholic Christians] is much greater than what divides us.<sup>5</sup>

How little divides them [Catholic and nonCatholic Christians] in comparison to what unites them.<sup>6</sup>

There is a temptation among Catholics to think that, when Blessed John XXIII and John Paul II repeatedly said that what unites Christians is greater than what divides them, the popes were indulging in some well-intentioned exaggeration for the sake of ecumenism. After all, are successors of Peter likely to say that what nonCatholics share with us is more important than the very ministry the popes themselves are exercising? And what about another thing that definitely divides us from many other Christians: the Eucharist itself?

In his encyclical on *The Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church*, John Paul II reminds us that the Eucharist is not “the wonder that surpasses them all,” but that the redemptive incarnation is.<sup>7</sup> Again, Jesus could have redeemed us without the specific institutional structure and sacramental system the Church has; he couldn’t save us without divinizing grace, *by definition*.

So when John XXIII uses the word “greater” to describe the redemption and grace that we share with nonChristians, we should take him to mean “of greater importance.” NonChristians share the sacrament that is incomparably the most important; John XXIII knew they do not all share the sacrament that is incomparably the greatest, the Eucharist.

This talk earlier discussed various reasons why today’s pastoral ministry does not sufficiently help Catholics appreciate the Gift of God. We can now add another obstacle to that appreciation that it is good for pastors and the team to understand but not necessarily for all Catholics to understand:

The Gift of God is not distinctively Catholic; we share it with all who are baptized by water or desire. But our understandable post-Reformation focus on the distinctively Catholic can unintentionally cause an error of perspective in which the specifically Catholic appears more important than what is foundationally Christian. This is the error that Popes Blessed John XXIII and Blessed John Paul II repeatedly warned us against.

(If any retreatants or team members are converts from another Christian tradition, it is understandable if they are inclined to focus on the distinctively Catholic, since they have correctly and courageously chosen what the Catholic Church can give that their previous tradition could not.)

And there is still an even more basic reason why we can miss the forest of salvation’s essence for all the structural trees that necessarily belong to it due to the specific history God chose for us: Human nature makes it much easier for us to focus on the important visible, rather than the all-important invisible, aspects of Christianity. The Church’s institutional structure is visible, and the sacraments are by definition visible signs. But the visible aspects of Christianity have no other goal than to let us live the invisible life of the Trinity, and the end is always more important than the means. The fact that it is much easier to focus on the visible than the invisible is another reason why the first Christian pastors kept reminding us of the “surpassing,” “inexpressible,” but invisible, glory of the Gift of God, divinizing grace.

Blessed Pope John Paul II also reminded us that the nature of Christianity is living the life of the Trinity:

Only Jesus can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.<sup>8</sup>

Invisible communion [the prior condition for receiving the Eucharist] . . . presupposes the life of grace, by which we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 P 1:4), and the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and love. Only in this way do we have true communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

In the latter quote John Paul II alludes to the difference between the visible and invisible aspects of Christianity. Since that difference is another important obstacle to Catholics’ appreciation of the glory of Christianity, John Paul II, like the first Christian pastors, knew we needed to have our attention called to the invisible Gift of God.

Section IV.

When pastors are making Catholics aware of all of this, they must deal with an

unavoidable question: What is the relation between the real presence of Jesus in us and his real presence in the Eucharist? The next part of the talk discusses that question.

Perhaps the easiest way for the retreatants, and the team, to understand it is this: Just as the Eucharist is incomparably the greatest sacrament, baptism (by water or desire) is incomparably the most important. Why? Because just as Jesus' mode of presence in the Eucharist is incomparably the greatest mode of his presence, his mode of presence in us from baptism is incomparably the most important mode of his presence. Most important to whom? Most important not only to us but to Jesus.

Receiving the Eucharist is incomparably greater than any privilege we can have *other than* living the Trinity's life. But the Eucharist is not the real presence of Jesus that is most important to us or to him, as the quote from St. Thérèse of Lisieux states (Section IV.A.3). He would rather be present in us than in all the tabernacles in the world, since the goals of the Eucharist are the preservation and perfection of the Trinity's life in us, for both of which the Eucharist is indispensable.<sup>11</sup>

Since God's nature is unchanging, we can even say that the preservation and perfection of the Trinity's life in us is the only changeable thing capable of failing to happen to me that Jesus cares about and thinks about while present in the Eucharist. Every other created thing he thinks about is for the sake of that.

Baptism, by which the Trinity's dwelling in us begins, is the most important sacrament. The Eucharist is the greatest sacrament. Likewise, in contrast to the Trinity's baptismal dwelling within us, the Eucharist is the greatest mode of Jesus' presence. To see in what sense it is the greatest mode of his presence, consider that we can point to the Eucharist, but not to anyone who shares the Trinity's life, and say "This IS God!" Or consider that after the consecration, we can *worship* the host and the liquid without idolatry. We cannot worship any other physical thing.

Another way both the priests and the team should look at it is this: The most exalted way we live the life of the Trinity is our participation in the liturgy, the greatest conceivable created act. The liturgy is the earthly consummation, anticipating the heavenly one, at which the Trinity's life in us aims. The liturgy is the source and summit of the Church's life.<sup>11</sup> But the Church's life, the life of which the liturgy is the source and summit, is the life of the Trinity, which is lived both in individual Christians and, since it is the life of a family of Persons, among brother and sister Christians.

The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one. (Jn 17:22–23)

For what purpose do we have the Trinity's glory? That "they may be one even as we are one." Who are these "we," and how are they one? In the context, one of the "we" is addressed as a "*Father*," and so the other must be his *child*, his Son.

How are these "we" one? In this era of ecumenism, we think of Christian unity in terms of doctrinal agreement. Doctrinal agreement is necessary, but would it make us "one even as" the Father and Son are one? Hardly. In the context of these texts, unity refers to the Father and Son being a perfectly loving family.

That they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me

and have loved them even as you have loved me. . . . that the love with which you have loved me may be in them. (Jn 17:23, 26).

In John 17, Jesus is praying for the same thing that he commanded in John 13: that Christians love their fellow Christians as he loves them and in a way that is visible to the world.

How are the Father and Son one? “In the unity of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the perfect expression of the Father and Son’s mutual love. In the New Testament, the love the Holy Spirit expresses is identified with paternal/filial love, that is, familial love. What does Jesus hear when he sees the Spirit descend on him? “You are my beloved *Son* in whom I am well pleased.” What do Christians hear the Spirit they have received saying? “*Abba*, Father.”

The Trinity is a family of persons ecstatically in love with each other. And that family’s life is the life of its extended family, the Church. The Church is a visible sign that is meant to witness to a God who is a family of perfectly loving persons. To give that witness, the Church should be a brother/sisterhood that visibly fulfills Jesus’ New Law of mutual Christian love and his prayer for Christians to be one the way the divine family is one.

The liturgy is the source and summit of the Church’s life. To be that summit is to be the summit of the life of the Trinity already dwelling in us when we come to the liturgy. To be the source of the Church’s life is to be a sign, the offering of sacrificial food and drink, that is identical with the very reality of Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension, which are the ultimate source of that life. So we cannot appreciate what it means for the liturgy to be the source and summit of the Church’s life unless we understand what the Church’s life is: the infinitely glorious life of the divine family. We must appreciate the essence of the Church’s life in order to appreciate the meaning of the source and summit of that life.

## Section V.

The relation between the indwelling of the Trinity and the real presence in the Eucharist inevitably and naturally brings up another question about which we must ensure that priests are lucidly clear, for the sake of both their ministry and their own spirituality: What is the relation between the awesome glory the Trinity’s indwelling gives priests and the awesome glory that ordination gives them? Priests need to understand the relation of the glory and dignity of the Gift of God they received at baptism and the glory and dignity they have from ordination. The next section of the talk discusses that question.

One way that it is absolutely necessary for retreatants, and for the team, to understand this is in terms of the spiritual primacy of the royal priesthood. The *Catechism* tells us that the royal priesthood is just our living the life of grace:

While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit—the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. (*Catechism*, 1547)

Since living the life of grace is incomparably more important and glorious than anything else we can do, the retreatants need to know, as ordained priests, that their royal priesthood is incomparably more important than their ministerial priesthood. The royal priesthood is nothing other than our participation in the Son of God’s personal activity of worshipping the Father.

And for all Christians, our main joy should come from our Christianity, not our specific ministry. The speaker should quote, “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:20). Jesus was not saying that we should take no joy in the success of our ministries but that nothing compares with the joy we should have from “knowing the Gift of God.” Because of that we should rejoice in all circumstances (see 1 Th 5:16–18; Ph 4:4–7).

The inadequate focus on the Gift of God in today’s pastoral ministry shows that the training of pastors has—through nobody’s fault—not given them a pastorally, as opposed to theologically, sufficient appreciation of the Trinity’s indwelling by grace. But unless they have a sufficient appreciation, both their ministry and their personal spirituality must suffer. They cannot have a proper understanding of the place of the ministerial priesthood in the Church’s life unless they have a proper understanding of the Church’s life. And their own spirituality needs an appreciation of the indwelling of the Trinity as much as any Catholic’s does.

The effects of ordination are described, correctly, as priests’ being incorporated into Christ, becoming other Christs, being configured to Christ, and being enabled to act in the very Person of Christ. All those statements are true. But when they are usually made, neither priests nor lay people are reminded that they are also true of every Christian, but with this difference: They are true of every Christian in infinitely greater and more glorious senses than they are true of priests.

At baptism, when we first receive the Gift of God, all Catholics are incorporated into Christ: we all become other Christs, are configured to Christ, and are enabled to act in the person of Christ, in senses that differ from the presbyterate. We also become sharers in Christ’s royal priesthood, a priesthood that will be exercised forever.<sup>11</sup> But phrases like “other Christs” and “configured to the person of Christ” are today much more often used of the ministerial priesthood, which will not be exercised forever, than of being Christian.

This is further proof, if any is needed, of how lacking is the *sine qua non* appreciation of the Gift of God in today’s spirituality. It should be axiomatic that those phrases apply to all Christians in their primary sense and apply to presbyters, though unequivocally and truly, in a secondary, less glorious, and less important sense. No matter how awesome is the way those descriptions are true of presbyters, the dignity and glory of sharing the Trinity’s life is infinitely greater than anything that can happen to us before death, including ordination or presiding at the Eucharist. Nor can ordination or the Eucharist be properly appreciated unless we understand that their sole purpose is the restoration, preservation, and perfection of the Trinity’s life in us.

Presbyters act in the person of Christ in a unique sense that is due not only respect but also awe. But since having the Gift of God is immeasurably more important and glorious than anything else that can happen to us, presbyters should be incomparably more in awe of the senses in which they are other Christs, are configured to the person of Christ, act in the person of Christ, and are *priests* by having the Gift of God, divine grace, than by having the presbyterate. Ordination configures men to Christ and his priesthood in a way dependent upon and subordinate in glory to the way baptism does.

All Christians can act *in persona Christi* in the most important sense: sharing in the Son’s personal worship of the Father; for anytime we make an act of Christian love, we are participating in Jesus’ personal love for the Father. That is what the Son of God’s life as the Second Person of the Trinity is, worshipping the Father; that is all the Son of God’s personal life

as a member of the Trinity is. And to have divine grace is to share in the Son's personal life of worshipping the Father.

These truths do not diminish the ministerial priesthood's dignity; they are its dignity. Unless we appreciate the surpassing dignity of life in divinizing grace, we cannot appreciate the dignity of the ministerial priesthood. The restoration, preservation, and perfection of the Trinity's life of love in and among Christians is the ministerial priesthood's only purpose. And the end, here the flourishing of the royal priesthood, is always more important than the means.

Those who use descriptions like "other Christs" or "acting in the person of Christ" as if these descriptions were exclusive to presbyters, rather than applying to presbyters in a less glorious sense, probably think they are enhancing the dignity of the presbyterate. In fact, they are diminishing its dignity—just as those who use the phrase "real presence" exclusively for the Eucharist in fact diminish the Eucharist's effectiveness.

Consider the presbyter's ministry of reconciliation. Under which of the following interpretations does that ministry have more dignity? Interpretation A: Reconciliation restores a sinner to full living unity with Jesus such that the sinner can now truthfully say "It is no longer I who live (and therefore acts), but Christ who lives (and therefore acts) in me" (Ga 2:20) such that the sinner can now participate in the Second Person of the Trinity's own act of worshipping the Father, and such that anyone who mistreats that sinner is mistreating Jesus himself. Interpretation B: Reconciliation of the sinner accomplishes something less (which must therefore be *infinitely* less) than any of these things.

Or consider a presbyter's Eucharistic ministry. Interpretation A: The Eucharist preserves and perfects the life of union with the person of Christ that has just been described. The Eucharist preserves and perfects the life that is infinitely greater than anything else that can possibly happen to a creature. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our really participating in the life of the Trinity by really participating in the life of the Second Person of the Trinity. Interpretation B: The Eucharist accomplishes something less (and so something *infinitely* less).

Clearly, Interpretation A gives the presbyter's ministry incomparably more dignity than Interpretation B. But let us assume there was a legitimate way to make a description like "acting in the person of Christ" exclusive to presbyters. Then, whatever that description would mean, it would have to mean something infinitely less glorious than being in the state of grace, because everything is infinitely less glorious than being in the state of grace.

Then how does a presbyter's way of being configured to Christ by ordination differ from the way that comes from his baptism? The specific way presbyters act *in persona Christi* is correctly expressed by adding *capitis* to that Latin phrase. Presbyters act *in persona Christi capitis*, in the person of Christ with respect to the social role, headship in his community, that his being a divine person necessarily gave him. But being living members of his community is infinitely more important than our social role in that community.

As a divine Person, Jesus had a social role that he could not share with other members of that community while he was on earth, for not every member of a community can be the head. Presbyters now share in Jesus' headship role in the Church. To have that social role is to be in a state higher than that of the laity.

In the Trinitarian community, the Father's role (*Genitori*, the begetter) is primary relative

to the Son's (*Genito*, the begotten), and the Father's and Son's roles are prior to the Spirit's (*Procedenti ab utroque*). In human families parents have the role of governors relative to children, the governed. But the inequality in status of these various social roles does not compare in value to the equality of the members of these communities as persons. Being living members of the Christian community means sharing the life of the Trinity itself. And the fact of being other Christs and priests that is identical with being living members of the Christian community is incomparably more important and worthy of awe than is the social role we play in that community.

Through ordination presbyters receive an increase of divinizing grace for the sake of their ministry. Presbyters do not just have more of Christ's powers; they are united to his Person in a new way. But when a priest in mortal sin offers the liturgy, he still acts *in persona Christi capitis* in the presbyterial sense, while a lay person worshiping at that liturgy is acting in the person of Christ in an infinitely more important sense. She or he shares in the Second Person of the Trinity's own life of worshiping the Father. The priest in mortal sin is not participating in the Son's personal life of worshiping the Father in that all important sense.

If a retreatant objects that "configured to Christ" in the case of priests means they are permanently configured to him by a "character" received at ordination, in contrast to baptismal grace that we can lose, recall that baptism and confirmation also cause permanent, ineradicable changes in us, indelible characters. Those characters permanently configure us to Jesus by permanently uniting us to his communal body, though not necessarily as living members.

If baptism did not cause us to have a permanent relation to Jesus' communal body, and so a permanent relation with his divine person, we could not receive any other sacrament, especially reconciliation if we lose baptismal grace. Just as a priest in mortal sin has to still be configured to the person of Christ the Forgiver in order to restore us to divine life, a Christian in mortal sin has to still be configured to the person of Christ who identified himself with our sinfulness, in order for a presbyter to restore her to divine life. A presbyter could not act in the person of Christ the Forgiver if the penitent was not permanently configured to the person of Christ who was made sin for us (see 2 Co 5:21).

Presbyters are also permanently configured to Jesus by their additional role in his communal body. But without the permanent characteristic of baptism in other Christians, the permanent characteristic of presbyters would not enable them to minister to other Christians. And let us not forget: Since you must have the permanent character of baptism to be ordained, without every Christian's permanent way of being united with the Son of God's communal body, the presbyter's way could not exist.

Whatever else the permanent characteristics of baptism, confirmation and holy orders do, they relate us to the Second Person of the Trinity by way of relating us to the other *alteri Christi* who are bodily members of Christ. Those characteristics are what enable all of us, presbyters included, to be ministered to by presbyters. So, the sense in which presbyters are configured to the person of Christ in his role as the *Head* is a way of being configured to Christ as really present in his communal body, since that body is the community of which the Second Person of the Trinity is the Head.

Nor should the fact that clergy and laity are baptismally united with Christ by being united with his humanity be taken to mean we are not united to his divine personhood, as if his humanity were some sort of barrier between us and his personhood, like a firewall shielding his

personhood from our human natures and vice versa. Of course, the opposite is true. Jesus assumed his human nature so that it could be the vehicle, the gateway, for our union with him, the Second Person of the Trinity, at the level of divine life.

Nowhere is this made clearer than in John 14:20, where Jesus tells the apostles that they are “in me,” and he “in them”; for he says so immediately after identifying himself as someone who is “in my Father,” which Scripture scholars would tell us is the author’s way of expressing the fact that Jesus’ belongs intrinsically to God’s life as a family member. So the one who is in them and they in him is a son of God who is not just a created son but a son who is “in his Father.” Jesus does not say that the one who is in them and they in him is just a human being; he says the one who is in them and they in him, and whom they already know to be a person, is an intrinsic component of God’s life even though he is distinct from the Father. By means of the humanity Jesus shares with them, he has united them with his divinity.

The Son assumed his human nature so that he could become an extended “corporate person,” “the fullness of *him* who fills the universe in all its parts” (Ep 1:23, NAB). We are the fullness of a divine person who fills the universe in all its parts.

The mystery of our way of being identified with the Son leaves room for another mystery that might seem to oppose that identification but in fact corresponds with it: the mystery that we are his bride (Rv 21:9; 22:17). Obviously, a marriage takes place between distinct persons. But as a kind of friendship, marriage also requires a kind of equality between the partners. “You have loved them as you loved me” (Jn 17:23) has been traditionally taken to refer to equality of love between God and divinized humanity. The Son can only be the groom of a divinized person. The image of marriage is actually another way of expressing the fact that our union with Christ makes us one corporate divine person with him, since marriage makes the partners one corporate person, as a human head and a human body constitute one multi-part person (Ep 5:28-30).<sup>11</sup>

## Section VI.

Christ’s communal body is another way he continues to be truly present, a way of which Catholics must have an appreciation in order to live the Christian life. Woefully under emphasized in today’s pastoral ministry is the doctrine of the Church’s identity with Christ as his communal body, a physical reality that is Jesus continuing to exist and act humanly in the world. This section of the talk discusses the relation of that presence of Christ to grace and to the Eucharist.

We recommend describing the Church as Jesus’ “communal,” rather than “mystical” body. In our religious culture, “mystical” is easily mistaken for “ethereal,” the exact opposite of our belief that the Church really is Jesus continuing to be humanly and physically present and active in the world. Nor is there anything apostolic about the tradition of calling the Church the mystical body. In fact, “mystical” was originally used to describe Jesus’ Eucharistic presence. Another accurate phrase for the Church would be “comprehensive body,” which is suggested by Ep 1:22-23, “the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.”

Like Christ’s indwelling by divinizing grace, his identification with his communal body is not the greatest mode of his presence. Only the Eucharist has that dignity. And there is a true sense in which “there is no Church without Eucharist,” since Jesus did indeed choose to make the liturgy really contain the source of the Church’s life: his passion, resurrection, and ascension. But there is an even more crucial and important sense in which “there can be no Eucharist

without Church,” since he could not have saved us without making us his communal body but could have saved us without ordination and the other sacraments.

Also, just as Catholics cannot receive the Eucharist unless Christ is already dwelling in them through grace, priests cannot be ordained unless they are already united to Christ in his communal body. There could be no real Eucharistic presence without the prior identification of Christ with his communal body.

So like Christ’s indwelling by grace, his identification with his communal body is more important than his presence in the Eucharist in this crucial sense: Just as Christ could have saved us without creating our institutional Church and sacramental system, but not without his indwelling by grace, so Christ could not have saved us without making us members of his communal body, whatever institutional structure it may or may not have.

The reason is that Christ could not unite us to him and just leave us otherwise separate individuals. When we receive grace, we do not just have an individual relation to Jesus. We become united in a family with all other Christians. For the grace we receive is participation in the life of the divine family. We are united to the Son in his very sonship, and so in his familial relation to his Father. And since all Christians receive the grace of participation in that family, we become members of the divine family together.

Nor does Christ’s being really present through his body mean that baptism unites Christians only to Jesus’ sacred humanity. Scripture tells us that we are dwelling in the Second Person of the Trinity (Jn 14:20). In Scripture the body of Christ is a mixed metaphor. When Scripture describes the Church as a part, the body, distinct from its head, Christ, we don’t directly see the whole Church itself as identical with Christ. But more than once Scripture affirms that the whole Church is the continued bodily existence of Jesus in the world (see Ac 9:4–5; 1 Co 12:12; Col 3:11).

For many Catholics, the presence of Christ they heard about most often prior to Vatican II was his presence through his communal body. That was due to the impact of Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Mystici Corporis*. Now an encyclical is published almost yearly; then it was a sufficiently infrequent event that *The New York Times* carried every encyclical word for word. So sometimes the impact of an encyclical could compare with that of a council. Just think of *Rerum Novarum*. *Mystici Corporis* had that kind of impact.

Today, however, the doctrine of membership in the Church as membership in Jesus continuing to be present in the world is almost an afterthought. In fact, after Vatican II, it was not uncommon to hear both priests and lay people speak in a way that seemed to make every human being a member of “the mystical body of Christ” already, rather than just called to be a member.

## Section VII.

The last section of the talk states the connection between this talk and the next and, in fact, the connection between the foundational material in this talk and the rest of the retreat.

Appreciating the greatness of the Great News is essential in order for Catholics to succeed in living the Christian life in their hostile environments. And appreciating the dwelling of Christ in us and of us in him is one crucial element of appreciating the Great News, but only

one crucial element. Other dispositions are necessary.

For example, appreciating the dwelling of Christ within us is as much a gift as that indwelling itself is. Catholics need to hear the greatness of the Gift of God proclaimed by their pastors. Hearing it preached is a necessary condition for appreciating their participation in the Trinity's life, but it is not a sufficient condition.

In fact, two other dispositions are necessary for having the needed appreciation of the Trinity's presence. So preaching about those dispositions has an even higher priority in pastoral ministry than preaching about that appreciation itself. The next talk discusses those dispositions. When Catholics understand how they can dispose themselves to receive an adequate appreciation of the Great News, they will know that the Great News is even greater than what we have seen of it so far, and greater than many of them have imagined, despite all the catechesis and pastoral ministry they have already had.

#### Appendix A: Objective Evidence for How Weak Our Appreciation of Christianity's Essence Is

**(The following material is meant for the team but NOT for the retreatants; it would be very inappropriate for inclusion in the retreat. But the team needs to be aware of it to understand the seriousness of our current pastoral weakness.)**

*This appendix contains objective evidence meant to demonstrate how far the normal pastoral life of the Church is from even being able to give Catholics an appreciation of what Christianity is. The appendix is part of Chapter 1 of the in-progress book The Best Kept Secrets in Christianity, by John C. Cahalan, Ph.D., available on the retreat's web site, [www.joyfulshepherdretreat.org](http://www.joyfulshepherdretreat.org).*

*The evidentiary nature of the appendix's material and its didactic style make it very unsuitable for use on the retreat. The evidence consists of sincere and candid statements from excellent bishops and priests, men who are responsible for the normal pastoral life of the Church, and theologians and educated lay people, who participate in the normal pastoral life of the Church. To document the evidence, it was necessary to cite these good Christians by name and point out the errors in their statements. So this section of the book had to be disputational, while a retreat must not be disputational. Please keep this crucial difference between the purpose of the retreat and the purpose of this appendix in mind.*

*Also, to give these good Christians the benefit of the doubt that they deserve, the author assumes something that is very probably the case: that these statements represent nothing more than slips of mind. **The question is whether people able to have slips of minds about matters so fundamental and crucial to the spiritual life of Christians are capable of pastoring in a way that allows the sacraments to achieve their goals.** If it could slip someone's mind, for example, that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist, would his training have prepared him to pastor adequately? As a matter of fact, no one who could experience the slips of mind illustrated below is prepared to pastor as the apostles did and enable Christians to have a firm appreciation of what Christianity is.*

*Again, the omissions in pastoral training this retreat hopes to remedy are the fault neither of these good men nor of the good Christian men responsible for their training. As the retreat's introductory talk tries to explain, we and they are innocent "victims" of historical changes beyond anyone's control, changes that, due to the power of modern technology,*

*happened too fast for pastoral training to keep up.*

*And once more, while cooperation with grace at the operantis level is each individual's responsibility, it is not solely the individual's responsibility (Ez 3:17-21; 33:1-9). The Church must teach us what we need to know, encourage us and offer supportive environments. The purpose of pastoring is to so dispose Catholics that the fruits of the sacraments are able to blossom in them. This appendix shows that, because of omissions in pastoral training that are nobody's fault, the normal pastoral life of today's Church does not adequately dispose Catholics to respond to grace. The operantis goals of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are what are at stake in this matter.*

1.

Does the normal pastoral life of the doctrinally sound parts of the Church support the kind of awareness of the Trinity's real presence in us that Paul expects the Corinthians to have? I will cite typical recent statements of otherwise doctrinally sound members of the hierarchy, priests, theologians, and others—statements that no one has deemed necessary to correct, despite their public character and often prominent authorship—that show the widespread and deep inadequacy of our current appreciation of what Christianity is and of the meaning of the priesthood.

One of our best apologists, Professor Peter Kreeft, said:

Where is (Christ) present now? In His Church. This means essentially two things. First, He is present in the Church's sacraments, primarily in the Eucharist. Second, He is also present in the Church's members, in the souls and lives of those who have believed in Him.<sup>11</sup>

Was Kreeft using "primarily" to mean that the Eucharist is the greatest mode of Jesus' presence and taking it for granted that the most important mode, the presence that is the essence of the Christian life, is the indwelling of the Trinity in every Christian? No, in the same place, he contrasts Jesus' Eucharistic presence to his presence in souls as an "objective" to "just a subjective" presence. You read that correctly; he called Jesus' presence in us merely subjective. But Dr. Kreeft did not intend to deny the nature and primary importance of the Gift of God; he just forgot about it. It just slipped his mind — and the minds of the editors of the well-known Catholic magazine that published him. (I wrote Dr. Kreeft about this, and he graciously agreed with my criticism.)

To reason from the absence of an effect to the absence of an adequate cause, would such a learned person forget about the very nature of Christianity and would a solidly Catholic journal publish views like these if the normal pastoral life of the Church had made Catholics sufficiently conscious of what Christianity is? Is the infinite glory of God's inexpressible gift just another fact that can slip our minds, like the fact that Jesus compared that gift to living water? And wouldn't we consider it scandalous for otherwise doctrinally sound writers and editors to publish an article about sanctifying grace that made the slip, not followed by any correction, of calling Jesus' Eucharistic presence merely subjective?

Fr. Andrew McNair of the Legionaries of Christ wrote in one of their periodicals: "Where may the . . . Lord be encountered as a living person, not just as an idea? Primarily, in the Eucharist."<sup>11</sup> Was McNair, unlike Kreeft, just focusing on the greatest mode of Jesus' presence

while taking it for granted that what the Christian life is was understood? I phoned him to find out. According to him, what the seminary taught about the relation of sanctifying grace to the sacraments after baptism, and what justified calling the Eucharist our primary way of encountering Christ, was that sanctifying grace begins as something small and grows by our receiving the other sacraments.

We do grow in grace. But if seminaries do not teach why Christ's personal indwelling through grace is immeasurably more important than any other encounter with him, they are not teaching what Christianity is. Theologians sometimes speak as if the state of grace starts as something embryonic. That is not a bad metaphor,<sup>11</sup> but only because the human embryo is a complete person with a complete human soul, just as the state of grace is the presence in glory of the complete Trinity.

One of our best prelates, Cardinal John O'Connor, said the Eucharist "is the most important teaching [of the Church] for me personally."<sup>11</sup> Was he thinking about the Mass's being the real presence of Jesus' redeeming acts? That teaching is important only because of what redemption is and the fact that it has occurred. And Jesus could have saved us without giving us the Eucharist or even without dying for us; again, he could not have saved us without divinizing grace, by definition.

In a book on the Mass with an *imprimatur*, Fr. Benedict Groeschel, CFR, one of our best preachers, said, "The only thing that we ever do in this world that is a real participation in the life we hope to live forever is to worship with Christ at the Liturgy."<sup>11</sup> If he really believes that, is he more focused on what Christianity is or on the Eucharistic ministry that is specific to his vocation? Fr. Groeschel does much good and certainly did not intend to teach falsehood. What Christianity is just slipped his mind. But can we even imagine what the Eucharist is slipping his mind or the mind of any doctrinally sound priest? And wouldn't it be a scandal if he did that in a public statement and did not correct it? Then why isn't it more of a scandal when what Christianity is slips a priest's mind without being corrected?

The contexts of all these statements show that they were made with the good pastoral intention of enhancing the Eucharist's effectiveness. But in fact these men were doing a great disservice to the supreme sacrament by suppressing one of the conditions, our understanding of what Christianity is, most necessary to achieve the Eucharist's goals of preserving and perfecting the Trinity's life in individual Christians and among brother and sister Christians.

I have more than once seen this kind of misperception in another form, when doctrinally sound Catholic publications name the Eucharist as the way Jesus keeps his promise never to leave us (see Mt 28:20).<sup>11</sup> But priests cannot be ordained without first belonging to the body that is Christ already really present in the world, the Church.<sup>22</sup> So there can be no Eucharist without the Church, any more than the fullness of the Church can exist without the Eucharist.

Other typical examples will follow, but not as many as could be cited. Examples, of course, are just anecdotal evidence. Is there any other kind of evidence for the imbalance in our spiritual formation? Yes.

In this chapter I have given a direct explanation of one of the neglected truths necessary for unleashing the power of the sacraments. In subsequent chapters I will explain other neglected truths. If the explanations are correct, they constitute nonanecdotal evidence against the adequacy of any spiritual formation that does not give those truths the prominence they must

have for the sacraments to bear fruit. You can judge for yourself what place these truths have in the Church's pastoral life as you know it. Your own experience can supply the evidence.

2.

No one should assume, however, that anecdotal evidence is deficient unless they can provide counterexamples, anecdotal evidence supporting the opposite conclusion. So where are the exceptions to, including the corrections of, the very common claims I have quoted and will quote? Most of these claims were publicly made, in venues where doctrinal soundness is always expected. Yet for as many times as I have seen and heard this severe lack of appreciation of the glorious reality that Christianity is, I have never seen anyone try to correct statements like these, no matter how publicly and prominently they were made.<sup>22</sup>

Since views like those I am criticizing are so common, the argument from the absence of an effect to the absence of an adequate cause is hard to ignore. If the normal spiritual formation that the Church gives us is in balance, why did not anyone, whether an ordained minister or a lay person whose awareness of what Christianity is derives, ultimately, from ordained ministers, think this lack of awareness of what Christianity is was important enough to correct?

**And our problem is not so much incorrect information as the *lack of pastorally crucial, correct information. Most importantly then, where are the positive counterexamples, the clear proclamations of the true nature of Christianity, made with enough frequency and clarity to prevent the misperceptions I am pointing out from being so widespread?***

Some people I am quoting are lay people or converts, like Kreeft. Are such examples unfair? Could a lay person's misinformation come from sources other than the Church's ministers, for instance, parents and teachers? Was a convert's initial catechesis inadequate? Then why was the inadequacy not corrected by their subsequent contact with the normal pastoral life of the Church? Ordained ministers must have either caused the problem, at least by omission, originally or failed to correct it by adequately emphasizing the nature of Christianity in the normal course of their pastoral ministry.

We must follow the cause-effect argument to its logical conclusion: If the contact of so many people, or the contact of their parents or teachers, with the normal pastoral life of the Church has not supplied the missing appreciation of the glorious nature of what Christianity is, those in charge of our formation must be failing to stress truths that need to be emphasized in order to achieve the goals of the sacraments.

Lest there be any confusion, however, I hasten to add that the problem I am pointing out is *not* about the Eucharist itself, its glory or its theology. The problem I am concerned with is Catholics having the dispositions necessary to cooperate with sacramental grace. Those dispositions presuppose our being sufficiently aware of certain truths about what we must believe and do. The statements about the Eucharist I have presented and will present are simply meant as evidence that we are not sufficiently aware of what we need to believe and do to cooperate with grace, with Eucharistic grace especially. The problem is not overemphasis on the Eucharist; it is underemphasis on more fundamental truths. (This chapter concerns only one of those more fundamental truths; chapters 2 through 5 deal with others.)

These statements about the Eucharist are evidence of something even more revealing

from the standpoint of the Church's ability to provide effective spiritual formation. I have chosen to make contrasting them to the truth about the inexpressible Gift of God my starting point because they represent a failure to give the Church's official teachers—our dedicated, self-sacrificing priests—an adequate understanding of their own mission; for a pastoral misunderstanding of the Eucharist on the part of Eucharistic ministers is a pastoral misunderstanding of their ministry, as sections 3 through 5 of this chapter will explain.

Although the theology of the Gift of God takes nothing away from the glory due the liturgy, the views I am criticizing do so by unintentionally preventing the liturgy from achieving its goals. The better we understand what the Eucharist is actually doing for us, the more we will love it. The better we understand what Jesus did for us, the more we will be devoted to him who remains really present with us as our food and drink.

Many will cite the tragically widespread disbelief in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist as a worse problem for the Church than these pious misrepresentations of the Eucharist's purpose. Doctrinally it is a worse problem, except for the unintended denial of what Christianity is that these misrepresentations imply. Still, depriving us of the formation needed to make the Eucharist effective is a grievous injustice to the whole Church, to ordained Eucharistic ministers, and to the greatest sacrament itself.

### 3.

Why are Catholics not more in awe of the (literally) incomparable glory of the Gift of God? Many of those responsible for our spiritual formation must either not be sufficiently in awe of it themselves or not be sufficiently aware of what and how to teach us. In either case, why are they not?

A little reflection will show that the potential—though only the potential—for this kind of imbalance in our pastoral formation is inherent in priests' education. It is an avoidable danger but one that seminaries must work, and so must be aware of, to avoid. Seminaries influence their students not just by the curriculum but by the environment they create. During the years that are most formative for people's professional identities, future priests are in an environment where they cannot avoid having their attention focused on the dignity and importance that are specific to their vocation; for they share an intense communal experience with other men who expectantly look forward to the same exalted service. In such an environment, won't the mere *omission* of adequate teaching about the glory of the Church's life be enough to produce an unbalanced view of the relation of the sacerdotal sacraments, the sacraments that require ordination, especially the Eucharist, to the Church's life? Nature abhors a vacuum. If balancing elements are absent from their formation, won't priests tend, consciously or unconsciously, to understand the Church's life from the viewpoint of the genuine spiritual glory specific to their sacramental ministry rather than understanding the meaning of that ministry from the viewpoint of the Church's life?

As Chapter Three will fully explain, another de facto "secret," for all *practical* (that is, pastoral rather than theological) purposes in today's Church is that Jesus' New Law (Jn 13:34-35) commands Christian love specifically for other Christians, not specifically for all humankind; the latter had already been commanded by the "Second Greatest Commandment," to love our neighbors as ourselves. The New Law directly concerns the life of the Church as a body; the Second Greatest Commandment directly concerns our lives as individuals. Christ was giving his future pastors the solemn pastoral mission of leading Christians to the goal of being a

loving brother/sisterhood, and he was telling his future Eucharistic ministers how important that pastoral goal is to their Eucharistic ministry.

Why? Because the Church is meant to be a visible sacrament of a God who is a family of persons ecstatically in love with each other. And it is by the Church as a body witnessing to that familial love that the world will come to know Jesus.

The glory which you [identified here as a “*Father*”] have given me (his “*Son*”) I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (Jn 17:22-23; and see 13:34-35).

I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me . . . that they may be one, even as we are one” (Jn 17:9-11).

Vatican II confirms this understanding of how the Church presents God to the world:

It is the function of the church . . . to make God the father and his incarnate son present and in a sense visible. . . . What does most to reveal God’s presence, however, is the *brotherly charity* of the faithful who are united in spirit . . . and who prove themselves a sign of unity (*The Church in the Modern World*, 21; emphasis added).

The sign of God’s presence is familial life, Christian brother/sisterhood, not just individual Christian lives. (Chapter 3 will explain why mutual love of Christians for Christians does not imply any discrimination against nonChristians.)

Do all our pastoral leaders understand the life of the Church as Scripture and Vatican II do, or do some of them understand the life of the Church from the point of view of the sacerdotal sacraments specific to their ministry? Archbishop Cyril Bustros is the Melkite Catholic Eparch for the United States and was an invited participant in the Vatican’s 2005 Synod on the Eucharist. Shortly before the Synod, at a seminary conference that many priests attended, he asserted deliberately and emphatically “The Eucharist is the principal means that the Church offers to the world for meeting the true God . . . in Jesus Christ.”

But according to Scripture and Vatican II, isn’t the principal means the Church offers the world for meeting the true God in Jesus supposed to be the way Jesus says the world will know “that you have sent me,” which is also the way Vatican II says “does most” to fulfill the Church’s function “to make the Father and his incarnate Son present and in a sense visible.” This excellent Archbishop’s fully intentional statement constitutes a misunderstanding, on the part of a chief pastor, of the Eucharist’s pastoral goals and therefore of the priest’s pastoral ministry.<sup>22</sup>

And if the archbishop’s statement was true, the principal way that the Church presents Jesus to the world is as true food and drink (Jn 6:55), true sacrificial and mutually shared food and drink (1 Co 10:16-21); for that is the pastoral meaning of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist, since the sacramental sign is what reveals that meaning.

Also, don’t forget that the early Christians did not allow catechumens to be present for the liturgy of the Eucharist. So was the Eucharist “the principal means the (early) Church offered” the catechumens “for meeting the true God in Jesus”? It would be more accurate to say that the Eucharist is the principal means the Church offers already evangelized, catechized and

baptized Christians for meeting God in Jesus. That would be even more accurate if we understand celebrating the Eucharist to be the chief act of Christians consciously striving to be a loving brother/sisterhood, which is the main pastoral goal of the Eucharist since loving brother/sisterhood is “what does most to reveal God’s presence.”

According to Fr. William Halbing writing in a solidly Catholic journal, whose editors participate in the normal pastoral life of the Church, something other than the unity shown by Christian brother/sisterly love will make Jesus known to the world:

Imagine what will happen to our world when Catholics really believe . . . the teaching of the Eucharist — that Jesus is truly present body, blood, soul and divinity . . . . Yes, then the world would know that Jesus is alive!”<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps Fr. Halbing meant that when we really believe in Jesus’ Eucharistic presence, we will achieve that goal of the Eucharist which is the mutual Christian love through which Jesus will be known to the world. If that is what he meant, however, he gives no indication of it. Nor does he or most of the priests and deacons I have been listening to and reading for the last forty-five years give any indication of having learned that the unity Jesus talks about in John 17 is a unity not just of doctrine but of love, love of Christians specifically for other Christians, as is the love of “one another” in Jesus’ New Law of John 13. And if they have learned these truths, those priests and deacons do not give any indication of having learned that these truths have enough pastoral importance to define the goal of their pastoral ministry and be proclaimed as such to the rest of us. (Again, where are the counterexamples?)

If the training of other pastoral leaders makes them think that the Eucharist is our principal means of presenting God to the world and/or that our belief in the real presence is what will show the world that Jesus is alive, it should be no wonder that the pastoral life of the otherwise doctrinally sound Church is so weak. Like the pastors and theologians quoted earlier, Archbishop Bustras and Fr. Halbing probably wanted to enhance devotion to the Eucharist. But in fact, their method of trying to enhance that devotion does a disservice to the Eucharist—a disservice to that which is most holy—by interfering with the Eucharist’s goals. The actual result is a diminishment, not the intended enhancement, of the Eucharist. Such leaders are unaware of Jesus’ pastoral plan, his plan for those who act *in persona Christi capitis* (in his person as head of the community) to help us respond properly to grace, a plan explicitly taught by Scripture and the Church. (I repeat, however, that this kind of unawareness, not devotion to the Eucharist itself, is the problem, and so achieving the fruits of Eucharistic grace is the problem.)

Christian brother/sisterhood is not optional for Christians, as is joining a community of religious brothers or sisters; Jesus makes it a new *commandment* (Jn 13:34-35). But it does not occur just spontaneously; we have to be led to it. So if our leaders do not know they are supposed to lead us to it or do not understand the high priority Jesus places on it, we may not achieve it. Why does the author of the fourth gospel present Jesus promulgating the New Law only to his chosen pastoral leaders, and only at the same time that he gives them the Eucharist and the instruction to continue it? As Chapter 3 will explain, the author was saying that Christian brother/sisterhood is a crucial pastoral responsibility of Jesus’ Eucharistic ministers; the full fruits of the Eucharist depend on it.

Prior to Vatican II some of the elements necessary for a balanced pastoral perspective in seminary education seem to have been present at least enough to have, though far from perfect success, more success than today.<sup>22</sup> The goal of Vatican II was the pastoral reform of the Church

of that time, but not everything in the Church needed reform. The council fathers meant to build on certain things that they took to be established, not to build the Church from the ground up. After Vatican II seminary training appears to have concentrated on what the council fathers were trying to build while overlooking the foundations the fathers did not stress because they assumed them to have been established. Given that omission in seminary education, Vatican II's emphasis on the liturgy and the nature of the hierarchy reinforced the seminary environment's potential for leading priests to understand the Church's life from the perspective of their ministry rather than their ministry from the perspective of the Church's (inadequately understood) life, which is not what Vatican II intended. For example, the teaching that the liturgy is the source and summit of the Church's life seemed to tell us to understand the Church's life from the viewpoint of the liturgy rather than requiring us to appreciate the essence of the Church's life in order to understand the meaning of the liturgy.

#### 4.

A learned and otherwise doctrinally sound priest-theologian, licensed to teach in pontifical faculties, publicly reasoned that since only priests act in the person of Christ, lay people must not be united to the person of Christ. He then reasoned that, since lay people are not united to the person of Christ, they must only share in Christ's powers.<sup>22</sup> He said these things at a meeting of more than ten thousand Catholics, including scores—perhaps more than a hundred—of priests. Yet he seemed to expect no one to be disconcerted, even though he was unintentionally squelching what should be one of the *sine qua non* foundations of their pastoral ministries and the very essence of Christianity.

The problem this revealing story illustrates is not just the omission of a theological fine point in this priest's training or the training of the priests in attendance. His training did not just fail to explain the meaning of the qualifier *capitis* in the phrase *in persona Christi capitis* (in the person of Christ *in his role as head of his community*).<sup>22</sup> More importantly for achieving the goals of the sacraments, his pastoral formation did not give him the appreciation of what Christianity is that Paul, Peter, and John used to motivate the Corinthians to Christian behavior. No one who had that appreciation could think that Christians are not united to Christ's person but only to his powers, or that the ministerial priesthood is as glorious as the royal priesthood, which is nothing other than the life of divinizing grace.

Of course, ordination gives presbyters an increase of divinizing grace for the sake of their ministry. But they do not even have to be in the state of grace to act *in persona Christi capitis* in their sacramental, teaching, and governing roles; that only requires their having additional powers of Christ, just the converse of what that theologian taught. This does not mean that presbyters only receive more of Jesus' powers and not a new way of being configured to his Person. But due to the way presbyters are configured to the Person of Christ, they would retain powers that come from his personhood even if they were all in mortal sin. So through the presbyterate, the Church will always be united to the Person of Christ in a way that gives it the power to restore the whole Church to divine life, if need be.

Chapter 3 will explain that viewing the Church's life in terms of the sacraments rather than vice versa can also tend to make the Church act like a service organization, a delivery system for spiritual goods, instead of a brother/sisterhood visibly living the Trinity's life of familial love for each other. Correspondingly, viewing the Church's life in terms of the sacerdotal sacraments can unintentionally foster an unChristian clericalism. If the Church's main purpose is to provide services that only a select group can provide, the Church's life will revolve

around the roles of those service providers, especially if we do not place an incomparably higher value on every Christian's way of being united with the person of Christ than on the presbyter's way. Without judging any particular case, it would be rash not to consider the possibility that a kind of clericalism was behind the scandalous response of some in the hierarchy to priestly sexual abuse; for some of them gave the impression of trying to avoid scandal to protect, not the family of God, but the institutional Church.

The institutional aspects of the pilgrim Church are necessary for it and belong to its nature. But they are necessary as means to the end of the Church itself being a sacrament, a sign of a God who is a family of persons ecstatically in love with each other. Scripture, tradition and Church teaching tell us that the visible sign of that God is supposed to be Christians loving their fellow Christians as the Father and Son love each other, not the Church's institutional and doctrinal unity, no matter how necessary the latter kinds of unity are. If the Church's institutional aspects are not fostering visible brother/sisterhood, they are not serving their purpose as taught by Scripture and Vatican II. To strengthen the Church as an institution, seminary training must strive to ensure that ordained ministers put the institution second. To do that, we have to restore balance in their training by giving them a firm and appreciative grasp of what "the surpassing grace of God in you" (2 Co 9:14) is.

Good priests — and they are by far the vast majority — are not responsible for our pastoral problems, but their leadership is essential to solving them. So the issue of priestly training cannot be ignored. If the cause of the imbalances in our normal spiritual formation was not omissions in priestly education, the cause would have lie in our self-sacrificing priests, by whom the rest of us are taught, themselves. Blaming good priests would be a gross injustice made even worse by the fact that they have already suffered enough from the omissions in their formation. For the sake of their own spiritual lives, priests need to learn the principles that are essential for knowing how to respond to grace. By keeping essential truths "secret," seminary education is not just failing the ministries of the ordained; it is failing their spirituality. Like the rest of us, they need an appreciation of the real presence of Christ that is the essence of Christianity for their spiritual lives as well as for their ministry. They cannot have that appreciation unless they know that the glory of "the gift of God" in us surpasses everything.

If "overemphasis" was a problem in priestly pastoral training, it would be better described as an overemphasis, *not* on the Eucharist, but on the sacrament of Holy Orders, on the dignity their exalted service bestows on presbyters. And our pastoral imbalance cannot be avoided, as some seminaries attempt to, just by stressing that priests are supposed to be *servants*. For there is too often a tendency among both clergy and laity to view the Church's life from the standpoint of the priest's sacramental service rather than that service from the standpoint of the far underappreciated life of the Church. Still, this problem is more the result of an underemphasis on what Christianity is than an overemphasis on what the ordained priesthood is. And the problem does not come just from what seminarians are or are not taught in the classroom; it comes from their total environment. (I am not calling for us to abandon the seminary system; see Chapter 6, where I return to the issue of priestly education.)

To be a pastoral handicap this de facto "overemphasis" need not rise to the level of clericalism. Still, some presbyters, deacons and conscientious lay people tell me they find clericalism to be widespread. Deacons as well as presbyters are obligated to say the Divine Office. A class preparing for the diaconate at one solidly orthodox seminary asked if they could say the office with those preparing for the presbyterate. The presbyterial seminarians turned down the request, thinking that they shouldn't let laymen share the office with them. Where did

those otherwise generous young men get such an idea? Aren't they supposed to be thrilled at the chance to be servants who wash the feet of Christ's members? They certainly wouldn't have gotten that idea on their own; so they must be innocent victims of a culture that gave it to them, and not just via the classroom. And those in charge of the culture that gave it to them must be innocent victims of the same culture.

5.

The remaining chapters will show that more than an appreciation of God's inexpressible gift is needed to fill the voids in our formation. I hope, however, that starting with the issue of what Christianity is has shown that we cannot explain the first-world Church's pastoral weakness in dealing with secularism solely by pointing to the existence of so much watered-down and heterodox doctrine. Pastoral ministry needs reform even where sound doctrine is taught.

Before going on, however, it is important to know that this is not the fault of Church leaders, including seminary officials. To explain why, I will offer some reflections on the pastoral history of the Church prior to Vatican II that show how the insufficiently stressed truths became "secret" at the pastoral, though not theological, level.

There appears to be a tendency for the Church's spiritual formation to place an unbalanced emphasis on whatever was stressed—or is perceived to have been stressed—by the most recent council or major encyclical. Councils and encyclicals are meant only to address specific theological and pastoral issues. Their teachings presuppose that in other respects Christian doctrine, with its hierarchical structure of truths, is understood. Still, although that doctrine is the necessary background for putting any special focus in perspective, it would be impossible for the Church to restate the whole of the Christian message every time it teaches. Thus, there will always be an opportunity for jumping on a pastoral bandwagon that places unbalanced weight on what a council or encyclical teaches to the extent of not paying sufficient attention to things on which the teaching depends. The result can be a de facto overemphasis on some things that is really just an unintended consequence of underemphasis on other things.

Vatican II has been described as the official end of the post-Tridentine period in the Church. With respect to Vatican II's intentions, as well as to many of its accomplishments, that description is probably true. With respect to the sacerdotal sacraments, however, the problem of an underemphasis of some parts of Christian doctrine reached its peak after, not before or during, Vatican II.

The first document promulgated by Vatican II was the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. That constitution's teaching about the liturgy as the source and summit of the Church's life presupposes an understanding of the divine, Trinitarian nature of the Church's life, as we have seen. The constitution did not expound on the glory of the Gift of God, divinizing grace; that was not its purpose. But that created the opportunity for its justifiably exalted praises of the liturgy to be taken out of the context on which their justification depends. Too often its statements were not read against the background necessary for understanding their true meaning.

A pastoral misunderstanding of the sacerdotal sacraments, again, is a misunderstanding of the ministry of priests. If we forget the nature of the Church's life, we can think that the priest's way of being configured to Christ and of acting in his person is more important than the baptized Christian's. Subsequent Vatican II documents stressed that the priest is a servant, but

the absence of enough counterbalancing teaching after Vatican II allowed the pastoral misunderstanding of the roles of priests and the sacerdotal sacraments to take root. Both the servants and those served could view the Church's life in terms of priests' sacramental service, rather than vice versa, and so fail to understand the need to subordinate that service to the ends for which it is a means, or at least not understand pastoral principles that are necessary to achieve those ends—even though for the vast majority of priests the desire to serve comes from the purest Christian motives.

As the summit of the life for which the sacraments are the principal means, the liturgy itself is an end, not just a means. But if those responsible for helping us respond to sacramental grace do not appreciate that life for what it is, the liturgy's role as the summit of that life can only be weakened. For example, when the life of which the liturgy is the summit is not that of Catholics who are consciously trying to make the Church a functioning and visible brother/sisterhood, something pastorally essential—I do not say theologically essential—is missing. As containing the reality of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, the liturgy is also the source of the Church's life. But between a church-building's foundation and the building's spire there are its walls, and between the liturgy as source and the liturgy as end (summit) there is the Church's life. If we are not sufficiently aware of the nature of the life that has the liturgy as its source, the liturgy as end will be a magnificent spire on a building not adequately set on its foundations.

The council fathers probably thought that stressing that the priest was a servant would prevent clericalism. If clericalism was a factor in the bishops' cover-up scandal, the disproportionate emphasis on the quasi-distinctively Catholic after Trent was a major contributor to the clericalism, since it resulted, though unintentionally, in an unbalanced stress on the role of the sacerdotal sacraments and the priesthood. But the council fathers understandably did not restate all the more fundamental doctrines, and in their entirely correct respect for and love of the sacerdotal sacraments, they did not see that their way of honoring those sacraments could have the unintended consequence of enhancing clericalism. Also, the emphasis on the priest as servant after Vatican II probably—and unintentionally—reinforced the de facto state of the Church as a service institution and delivery system for spiritual goods, despite many sincere words about parishes being families and communities.

The temptation to place unbalanced stress on some parts of the Church's doctrine or pastoral life will probably always arise after events like councils and ground-breaking encyclicals. (A similar imbalance might occur if the ideas in a book like this were adopted in a way that, whether for reasons of omission or commission, was de facto unbalanced.) Again, I have cited misperceptions about the Eucharist and priesthood as evidence not of overemphasis on them but of our insufficient awareness of other things. So I urge anyone who might want to make use of these ideas not to do so in a way that would diminish the importance and dignity of ordination, the other sacerdotal sacraments, or anything else distinctively or quasi-distinctively Catholic—most especially the Eucharist. That would just be another distortion that would hinder the full release of the sacraments' power. There can be no better way, for example, to pray for renewal in the spiritual formation the Church provides than adoration of Jesus really present in the Eucharist. But since we know God by knowing his love for us, the better we understand what Jesus has done for us and that his deepest desire is to reside in us, the better we will be able to adore the Eucharist.

Are the Mass and Eucharist the Most Important Things?

“Pope John the XXIII loved to say again and again that ‘What unites Catholic and non-Catholic Christians is much greater than what divides us’.” (St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sit*, 20.2) “How little divides Catholic and non-Catholic Christians in comparison to what unites them.” (St. John Paul II, *ibid.* 22. 2) What unites us does not include the Mass/Eucharist, the other sacerdotal sacraments, apostolic succession, or the Church’s hierarchical structure.

There is an infinite distance between a baptized and unbaptized baby; but only a finite distance between a baptized baby and the greatest saint. So what happens to us in baptism, by water or desire, or when restored to grace in reconciliation, is infinitely more important than anything else that happens to us until death, e.g., participating in Mass, receiving the Eucharist, or holy orders.

After evangelization and baptism, everything else the Church does has the sole purpose of preserving and perfecting divine life in each Christian and in the Body. “The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify human beings, to build up the Body of Christ, and to give worship to God” (*Sacrosanctum Consilium* [SC] 59). So the sacraments are means to that end, “the purpose.”

The end is always more important than the means. SC’s “the Liturgy is the source and summit of the *Church’s* life” (italic added) is not saying that a means is more important. The “Church’s life” in SC is the life of the sacred hierarchical institution, which is a means to something infinitely greater, the Trinity’s life in each of us. The council was assuming that we appreciate what grace is. Today, we can no longer assume that, as Appendix A shows.

When *Lumen Gentium* [LG] uses “source and summit of the *Christian* life” (italic added), it is in all probability referring to the Trinity’s life present in Christians, a *gratia gratum faciens* and “the one thing necessary,” “the pearl of great price,” “*the* Gift of God”. As a means to that end, the institutional Church’s sacramental life, which is the viewpoint of SC, is an infinitely lesser *gratia gratis data*. A sufficient proof that this is SC’s viewpoint is:

Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of the minister . . . but especially in the eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. . . . (SC, 7)

But the council knew that Jesus’s real presence in the baptized is infinitely more important than his presence through the minister, who could be in mortal sin. If a Mass’s minister is in mortal sin, he still acts in *persona Christi Capitis*. So Jesus’ mode of presence in a lay person sharing His personal act of worshiping the Father by the tiniest act of charity is infinitely above His presence in the priest. Participating properly in the Mass *is* the highest act of LG’s “Christian life,” but any act of that life infinitely transcends SC’s “the Church’s life.” The end transcends the means. The Mass is the presence of Jesus’ own supreme act of love; that mode of its presence is not most important.

SC 7 adds that Christ is also present “where two or three are gathered in my name,” where “in my name” must refer to Christians living the life of grace together. The communal life of grace is “the Church’s life” in an infinitely deeper sense than SC’s institutional sense: brother/sisterly

love, the Trinity's own familial life. If the Mass's minister doesn't have the Trinity's life when he is exercising the summit of SC's "the Church's life," he is not at the summit of LG's "Christian life," but lay people properly participating in Mass are at the summit of it.

Insofar as the Mass is the real presence of Christ's saving acts, it is also the source of both SC's "the Church's life" and LG's "Christian life," But most Catholics, lay and ordained, can't appreciate the Mass for the latter since they don't appreciate the inexpressible (2 Cor 9) glory of the of grace those acts gained for us. And the meaning of a sacrament is shown by its sign. Though the Mass truly contains the source of grace, it's sacramental purpose is not to be the originating source of grace in us; baptism does that. The Mass is meant for Christians *already in grace* to offer and be fed by Christ's body and blood really present as true sacrificial food and drink.

This distortion is behind the pastoral crisis we have been in for 50 years. (But we can't appreciate that unless we know we have been in a crisis.) The question isn't only "What should we do differently" but "How could our wonderful, self-sacrificing pastors have become so out of touch," as the evidence in Sherry Weddell's *Forming Intentional Disciples* proves. That is why some deacons say "You can't get through to priests. We've worked with them in parishes for 25 years; so we know you can't." God's chosen, anointed leaders deserve much better; so do the rest of us.

And that is why a priest's personal spirituality could be enhanced by movements like the Cursillo and charismatic renewal, without their changing his pastoral vision one bit—while many lay people could clearly see that God was raising up such movements for the same reason he always has: to supply important things missing in the Church's current pastoral life. That is also why a group of fine priests wouldn't let someone speak of the Church's "pastoral weakness," since it "sounds like you are criticizing"—even though the seminary must teach priests that after 2000 years we know that the pastoral life of the Church will always need criticism, as Paul VI said.

This distortion of the Mass's role also distorts the priest's ministry and inculpably puts him in a fantasy world in which the "Church's life" as the one thing necessary, the pearl of great price, is centered around and depends on the presence of Christ in him, since the "Church's life" as a sacred institution consists of his ministries. He learns he is a servant, but his service is "the summit of *the Faith*," (italic added), a bishop's words which show how the distortion has grown.

The sacraments' fruit presupposes that the infinite glory of the Trinity's life freely given to all, priests and laity, is absolutely first in the background consciousness of our lives. In Corinth and Galatia, Paul was surprised to find that basic catechesis was not enough for that. To motivate Christian behavior his pastoring had to start regularly reinforcing Christians' joyous appreciation of why the Great News is great. Now, we wrongly take that for granted. *Operato*, grace is put in pastors' hands to plant and water (1 Cor 3:6-9); *operantis*, they can squelch it (1 Thes 5:19).

In *America*, Scott Hahn approvingly quoted a cardinal saying "For Catholics, evangelization is about the Eucharist." If our normal pastoral life didn't prevent a heresy like that, it's failing. No wonder we're losing people faster than we evangelize. What an (unintentional) misuse of the greatest sacrament!

## Usable Quotes

### God's Life in Us:

1. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (Jn 14:20)
2. They pray for you longingly because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (2 Co 9:14–15,)
3. The glory which you have given me I have given to them. (Jn 17:22)
4. Those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rm 8:30)
5. He destined us . . . to be his sons . . . to the praise of his glorious grace. (Ep 1:5–6)

### The Greatness of the Great News as the Motivator for Christian Behavior:

6. They pray for you longingly because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (2 Co 9:14–15)
7. Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. . . . Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test (2 Co 13:5; see Jn 14:20, 23; Ga 2:20; 2 P 1:4)
8. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (1 Co 3:16)
9. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? (1 Co 6:19)
10. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? (1 Co 6:15)
11. The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. . . . I made known to them your name, . . . that the love with which you have loved me may be in them. (Jn 17:22–23, 26)

### The Most Important Real Presence Both to Us and to Jesus:

12. Our Lord does not come down from Heaven every day to lie in a golden ciborium. He comes to find another heaven which is infinitely dearer to him—the heaven of our souls, created in His Image, the living temples of the Adorable Trinity. (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, p. 43 of the electronic edition, [discerninghearts.com/?page\\_id=3224](http://discerninghearts.com/?page_id=3224).)
13. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, . . . so that the world may know that you

have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. . . . I made known to them your name, . . . that the love with which you have loved me may be in them (Jn 17:20–23, 26).

### The Royal Priesthood:

14. While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope, and charity.

### Endnotes

1

Pope John XXIII, as quoted in Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, Encyclical on Commitment to Ecumenism, no. 20, May 25, 1995, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

2

Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 22.

3

Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, p. 43 of the electronic edition, [discerninghearts.com/?page\\_id=3224](http://discerninghearts.com/?page_id=3224).

4

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 51, quoting *Dei Verbum*, 2, 260, 265, 460, 797, 1127, 1129, 1265, 1691, 1692, 1695, 1812, 1988, 1997, 1999, 2565. The Trinity’s life consists of having each other as objects of awareness and love. Having the Trinity itself as object of awareness (by faith) and especially of love is having the Trinity really present in us, sharing their own life.

5

Blessed Pope John XXIII, as quoted in Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 20.

6

Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 22.

7

John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 58.

8

Pope John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time, no. 5, October 16, 1979, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). It does not belong to humanity’s essence that every human being must be Caucasian, but being Caucasian does belong to Socrates’ individual essence, his individual humanity. It was never going to occur that Socrates someday would change from being Caucasian to being Polynesian. No individual instance of human nature can come into existence unless it is the

human nature of something with its own individual characteristics given it by its own individual history. So there are primary and secondary senses in which something belongs to the “essence” of a human being like Socrates—or the essence of a divine plan for salvation. This is just one instance of a principle whose widespread theological significance we have just begun to understand. Only recently did we discover the teaching of Aquinas that every word for a “pure perfection,” a perfection capable of existing in an immaterial state, like “essence” or like “knowing” as opposed to “sensing,” must have such primary and secondary senses. (See John C. Cahalan, “How Yves Simon Trumps Cajetan on Analogy,” Appendix B; at <http://home.comcast.net/~modaris/onlinestorage/strump.pdf>, or [www.foraristotelians.info](http://www.foraristotelians.info)

9

Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistic*, Encyclical on the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, no. 36, April 17, 2003, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

1

<sup>0</sup> Jn 6:53; obviously, the Eucharist is not indispensable for the baptized who die before being able to receive the Eucharist.

1

<sup>1</sup> Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 10.

2

*Catechism* 783-786, 901, 904, 941, 1129, 1268, 1272, 1361, 1391, 1546, 1547, 1591, 1694, 1997, 2157, 2565, 2717, 2782.

1

<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of the metaphysics behind our union with the Son, see John C. Cahalan, Ph.D.,

“The Real Presence of the Trinity in Jesus’ Human Nature and Ours” at

<http://home.comcast.net/~theoideas/onlinestorage/Sgrace2.pdf>

1

<sup>4</sup> Peter Kreeft, “What I Learned from a Muslim About Eucharistic Adoration,” *Crisis*, December 1998, p. 30.

1

<sup>5</sup> Andrew McNair, “Making Holy Thursday Last All Year,” *The National Catholic Register*, April 8, 2001, p. 9.

1

<sup>6</sup> All of our earthly union with the Trinity is a “seed” of the heavenly union; 1 Jn 3:9.

1

7

John Cardinal O’Connor, as quoted in “Corpus Christi and ‘The Wonder of His Presence,’” *The National Catholic Register*, May 30, 1999, p. 3.

1

<sup>8</sup> Benedict Groeschel, Foreword to Scott Hahn, *The Lamb’s Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. xv.

1

<sup>9</sup> For example, see “Exposed,” *The National Catholic Register*, December 24, 2000, p. 1.

2

<sup>0</sup> See John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nos. 23, 28, 35.

21

With one exception, a letter to the editor written by this author, *Crisis*, June 1999, pp. 3–4

2

<sup>2</sup> If you worry that I am taking this statement out of context or distorting the Archbishop’s views in any other way, the talk was recorded. Contact me at [cahalanj@comcast.net](mailto:cahalanj@comcast.net).

2

3

“Holy Communion, *Pentecost Today*, October/November/December, 2005, p. 7.

2

<sup>4</sup> Balancing elements can come from the religious culture of society as a whole. See Section 7 of this chapter.

2

<sup>5</sup> I am not naming this fine priest, since he is a personal friend to whom I am much indebted.

2

<sup>6</sup> *Catechism*, 1591.