

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EUCHARIST: WORSHIP THAT MAKES US WHOLE

1. Eucharist, Agape, Holy Sacrifice, Mass, Divine Liturgy: What's in a Name? (October 26)

Names we give to the Eucharist shape the way we welcome God's healing, presence, and fellowship.

2. The Words of Institution (Consecration): Are They Magical? (November 2)

Jesus' words "This is my body" make sense if we become aware of the many ways Jesus is present in our celebrations.

3. **The Invocation of the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis): The Eucharist's Forgotten Act? (November 9)**

The Holy Spirit is called to sanctify bread, wine, and the community.

4. The Great Thanksgiving (Doxology): What Does the Eucharist Have to Do with Praise? (November 16)

The Eucharistic turns everything into praise and thanksgiving to the Father.

5. "Do This in Memory of Me" (Memorial): Are We Remembering or Re-Living? (November 30)

The Eucharist is more than remembrance - it unites us to Jesus' death and resurrection, until he comes again.

6. The Eucharist as Meal and Sacrifice: How Do These Fit Together? (December 7)

We become a sacrifice to God by being united in one body through the sharing of one bread.

7. One Bread, One Body (Communion): How United Do We Really Become? (December 14)

The Eucharist heals us from division and isolation by calling us into fellowship with each other and with God.

8. "Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord" (Mission): How Does the Eucharist Shape Our Lives? (December 21)

The Eucharist blends into everyday life as God sends us out to love, serve, and be his witnesses to the world.

3. THE INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (EPICLESIS): THE EUCHARIST'S FORGOTTEN ACT?

1. See Appendix 1. The Great Thanksgiving - Eucharistic Prayer I (BCP)

And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe **to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures** of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, **may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood**

2. The meaning of the word 'epiclesis'

- 2.1. The term comes from the Greek *epíklēsis*, meaning "invocation", "calling upon (from above)". It is the part of the Eucharistic Prayer (or Anaphora) in which the celebrant invokes the Holy Spirit

- i. to descend upon the **bread and wine** so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ.
 - ii. and to sanctify **those who partake of the Eucharist** (i.e., the faithful) or the community gathered.

3. Other versions of the Epiclesis

- 3.1. Rite II

Sanctify them [the bread and wine] **by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son**, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. **Sanctify us also** that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

4. How to understand this part of the Eucharistic Prayer?

- 4.1. First a reminder of who is the Holy Spirit

- 4.2. Then a reflection on the meaning of the words 'sanctify', 'sacrifice', 'consecrate'

5. Who is the Holy Spirit?

- 5.1. The Holy Spirit is the *love* that unites the Father to the Son

Romans 5:5 "and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

1 John 4:12-13 "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

2 Corinthians 13:14 "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

- 5.2. The Holy Spirit is the *love* that guided Jesus in his mission

Luke 3:22 "And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"

Luke 4:1 “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.”

Luke 4:14 “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.”

Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 10:21 “In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth...’”

- 5.3. After his resurrection, Jesus send the Holy Spirit so that
 - i. We are united to him and to the Father by the same *love* that unites them
 - ii. We are guided in our lives by the same *love* that led Jesus in his mission.
6. We can understand the role of the Holy Spirit by the two most important things *love* does
 - 6.1. It *unites* people with each other
 - 6.2. It *transforms* us and our lives, makes us different people, *loving* people.
7. This is why the Spirit is called “Holy”
 - 7.1. “Holy” is the English word for the Latin *sanctus* and the Greek *hagios*
 - 7.2. In English we do not perceive immediately the connection between the Holy Spirit and “sanctification” which is evident in Latin: he ‘sanctifies’ because he is ‘*sanctus*’.
8. In the Eucharist we ask to the Holy Spirit
 - 8.1. To “sanctify” the bread and wine
 - 8.2. To “sanctify” us.
9. How do we understand the word “sanctify”?
 - 9.1. Set apart, make special, divine, “sacred”
 - 9.2. “transform” something ordinary into something acceptable to God – something that God can like.
10. Interestingly, we find that the words “sacrifice”, “sanctify”, and “consecrate” mean the same thing!
 - 10.1. *Sacrifice*, from the Latin *sacrificium*, from *sacer* (“holy”) and *facere* (“to make”): **“to make holy”**.
 - 10.2. *Sanctify*, from the Latin *sanctificare*, from *sanctus* (“holy”) and *facere* (“to make”): **“to make holy”**.
 - 10.3. *Consecrate*, from the Latin *consecrare*, *con-* (“together”) + *sacrare* (“to make sacred”): **“to make sacred (holy)”**.
11. It is only when we link who the Holy Spirit is, what he does, with the action of “making Holy” that we understand what sanctification, sacrifice, and consecration *really* mean:
 - 11.1. We become ‘sacred’, ‘saints’, ‘holy’
 - i. by being *united* with the Father and with each other in love
 - ii. and this love *transforms* our lives, makes them a ‘sacrifice’ that God loves, ‘acceptable’ to him.

Romans 12:1: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

Ephesians 5:1–2: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

- 11.2.** Cf. the sentence the priest often says after the sign of peace and before the Eucharistic prayer:

“Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God.”

- 12.** St. Augustine’s definition of sacrifice in the *City of God*

“The true sacrifice is every work that is done so that we may cling to God in a holy fellowship. This is the sacrifice of Christians: the many are one body in Christ.” (10:6)

An image from the sacrifices of the Old Testament

- 13.** In the Old Testament, sacrifices are often sealed by the descent of heavenly fire, a visible manifestation of divine acceptance and sanctification.

Leviticus 9 ¹On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel, ²and he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and offer them before the Lord. [...] ²²Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. ²³And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. ²⁴And **fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering** and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

1 Kings 18 ³⁰Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. ³¹Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, “Israel shall be your name,” ³²and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed. ³³And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.” ³⁴And he said, “Do it a second time.” And they did it a second time. And he said, “Do it a third time.” And they did it a third time. ³⁵And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water. [...] ³⁸Then **the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.**

- 14.** The fire that came down from heaven

14.1. Was the sign that the offering was agreeable to God

14.2. Allowed the offering to ‘reach’ God, to become rise to him in the form of smoke (similar to incense that rises as a sign of prayer).

- 14.3. The action of the Holy Spirit can be seen as the fire that allows both the offering of bread and wine and those who make the offer to become agreeable to God.
- 14.4. This fire can be seen as an image of *love*.
- 14.5. Song of Solomon 8

6Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of the Lord.