

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.

8. “GO IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD” (MISSION): HOW DOES THE EUCHARIST SHAPE OUR LIVES?

1. We can sum up the whole history of salvation as the unfolding of God’s effort to gather humanity in one people, one body, one community.
2. In the first chapters of Genesis, humanity is described as doomed to division, scattering, enmity
 - 2.1. The man and woman turn against one another (“The woman whom *you* gave me...”, 3:12)
 - 2.2. The first human relationship outside Eden ends in murder (4:8)
 - 2.3. Lamech boasts of vengeance “seventy-sevenfold” (4:23–24)
 - 2.4. The building of the tower of Babel God’s response is the confusion of language and scattering over the earth (11:8–9)
3. The re-unification of humanity goes through stages
 - 3.1. **Abraham:** God begins the work of re-gathering scattered humanity by calling one person and one family so that unity may be restored for all peoples, not by exclusion but by mediated blessing.

“In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3)
 - 3.2. **Israel and the Covenant:** Through the Exodus and the covenant at Sinai, God gathers a dispersed and enslaved people into a community ordered by shared worship, justice, and responsibility toward one another.

“I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.” (Exodus 6:7)
 - 3.3. **Kingship and Temple:** By uniting the tribes and establishing a common place of worship, God gives Israel a visible center of unity meant to draw both the people and the nations toward shared praise.

“Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together,
to which the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.” (Psalm 122:3f.)
 - 3.4. **The Prophets and the promise of a deeper re-gathering:** When political and religious unity collapses, the prophets announce that God himself will gather the scattered, not merely by restoring structures but by renewing hearts and covenant.

“I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them.” (Jeremiah 23:3)
4. Jesus’ mission is to fulfil this promise
 - 4.1. Jesus affirms that his mission is the gathering the scattered

“How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37)
 - 4.2. Jesus is the good shepherd because he gathers the sheep

“He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” (Mark 6:34)

- 4.3. Jesus gathers humanity by inaugurating a new community
 “He called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles.” (Luke 6:13)
- 4.4. Jesus’ death is explicitly interpreted as an act of gathering
 49But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. 50Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” 51He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. (John 11:49–52)
- 4.5. Jesus’ gathering mission extends to the whole of humanity
 “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold... So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”(John 10:16)
- 5. The main ways in which Jesus restores the unity of humanity
 - 5.1. He calls twelve disciples (echoing the twelve tribes of Israel)
 - 5.2. Symbolically the cross gathers the whole humanity in one embrace and joins it with the Father
 - i. The horizontal beam is the sign of the embrace of humanity
 - ii. The vertical beam connects earth to heaven.
 - 5.3. By becoming one body with Jesus, who is the Son, his Father becomes our Father and we are all brothers and sisters, children of God
 Jesus said to Mary Magdalen, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (John 20:17)
 - 5.4. The sending of the Holy Spirit realizes this unity in our hearts
 “Each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.” (Acts 2:6)
 “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13)
 “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5)
 “Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit.”(Ephesians 4:3–4)
- 6. The Eucharist re-plays so to speak the whole history of salvation in each celebration
 - 6.1. We live a life in a world that constantly pulls people apart from each other (socially, economically, racially)
 - 6.2. We are gathered by God’s call
 - 6.3. We are instructed and transformed by listening together to the Word of God
 - 6.4. We are reconciled to each other
- 7. The four main aspects of the Eucharist are different ways of expressing this same process of divine gathering
 - 7.1. **Meal:** we sit at the same table as one family

- 7.2. **Memorial:** we truly ‘eat the bread in remembrance of Jesus’ when we ‘discern the body’ that is the community
- 7.3. **Sacrifice:** that which is agreeable to God is the love we have for one another
- 7.4. **Communion:** as we eat the same bread and drink the same cup, we are united to Jesus and to each other, in a ‘common-union’.
8. God’s project from the beginning is that the whole of humanity should be united in one people, one communion, one family – this is why just as important as the aspects considered so far, there is yet another aspect of the Eucharist which is ‘**mission**’ or better ‘**commission**’.
9. Cf. the end of Matthew’s Gospel
- Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16-20)
10. Conclusion of the celebration of the Eucharist in Rite II
- 10.1. After Communion, we say this prayer
- Eternal God, heavenly **Father**,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.
- 10.2. or the following
- Almighty and everliving God,
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food
of the most precious Body and Blood
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.
And now, **Father**, send us out
to do the work you have given us to do,
to love and serve you
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.
11. Then sentence after the blessing
- Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Let us go forth into the world,
rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

12. Jesus' disciples were sent to the world only once they had been transformed by the experience
 - 12.1. not only of *living* with Jesus, listening to his teaching
 - 12.2. but of his death and his resurrection
 - 12.3. and the breaking of the bread.
13. Just after Jesus' death on the cross they were frightened and hid – and only when they meet the risen Christ they become able to go forth into the world, “to love and serve the Lord”.
14. Similarly for us, we should trust that the celebration of the Eucharist, Sunday in and Sunday out, transforms us, makes us truly disciples.
15. Besides, we are not sent individually but *as a community*: true and effective mission can only be the work of a community, and a community that is not missionary, that is eager to embrace everyone, is not truly Christian.