

## SAINT THOMAS SPRING THEOLOGY LECTURE 2026

### **Idolatry and The Eucharist: How to See God in Things without Making a God of Things**

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A common story about the world we live in goes like this: Once upon a time we believed in gods and spirits and fairies and saints and wood sprites. Life was shrouded with mystery and ordered by meaning. Now, largely because of science, the modern world has been disenchanted. “Disenchantment” is the most common translation of sociologist Max Weber’s term *Entzauberung der Welt*, literally the un-magic-ing of the world. Weber famously wrote about the “iron cage” of modernity, a heartlessly efficient machine from which all enchantment had been ruthlessly eliminated, for better and for worse. This separates us in the modern West both from our ancestors in Europe 500 years ago and from our contemporaries in the global South today, for whom the spirits, both benign and malevolent, are still close at hand. Philosopher Charles Taylor contrasts the “porous selves” of our ancestors and our contemporaries in Africa with the “buffered selves” of us in the modern West. For *them*, power and meaning are out there in the world, in spirits and charged objects like saints’ relics, and that power penetrates us beyond our control. For *us*, on the other hand, power and meaning are in the mind; any meaning the world has is assigned by us.

Disenchantment is supposedly a marker of secularization. I, however, am interested in the way worship goes on even in supposedly “secular” contexts. Are the people dashing madly for the discounted electronics at midnight on Thanksgiving Day really “buffered selves”? Are we disenchanted, or is that a story we tell to flatter ourselves?

This is where the ancient notion of idolatry becomes useful again. In his first encyclical, Pope Francis writes that when one stops believing in God, one does not simply stop believing; rather one believes in all sorts of things, “an aimless passing from one lord to another. . . . Those who choose not to put their trust in God must hear the din of countless idols crying out: ‘Put your trust in me!’” The same point is made by the novelist David Foster Wallace. In his Kenyon College commencement address he told the graduates “in the day-to day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as

atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship.” He goes on to say that the reason you might want to worship a real God “is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive.” Worship money, and you’ll never have enough. Worship your body, and you will always feel ugly. Worship power, and you will always be afraid.

I’m going to spin out this idea that everybody worships, but often what we worship eats us alive. I will examine this dual dynamic: we exalt our own creations, but that ends up diminishing us. I will examine some aspects of our culture—specifically nationalism and consumerism—and the critique of idolatry in the Bible. Then I will turn to the Eucharist for practices that resist idolatry. The Eucharist is a different kind of consumption that helps us see God in things without making a god of things, thus resisting the dual dynamic of the exaltation of things and the diminishment of people.

## **I. Idolatry**

Let’s go back to Max Weber for a minute. According to Weber, salvation religions were invented to give a rational explanation for why the righteous suffer and the unjust prosper. Present suffering was explained by sin committed in a former life or by one’s ancestors, or an afterlife was posited to ensure that the guilty were punished and the righteous rewarded. So salvation religions rationalize suffering by positing an otherworldly sphere. This leads to a split between this world and the other world, between facts and values, that eventually pushes religion to the private sphere of values and leaves an autonomous disenchanted world of fact governed by science, the state, and the capitalist market.

What most people know about Weber ends there with disenchantment. But Weber thought that we can’t live without meaning, so we continue to invent gods to order our world—he is thinking particularly of nation-states and the capitalist economy. But, like the old gods, we can’t control them, and they come to dominate us. Weber writes “Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another.” The creations of humanity are unpredictable and ungovernable, Weber thought, precisely because there is no true God, no inherent order to the cosmos. And so humans are controlled by our own artifacts. As the monster says to Dr. Frankenstein, “You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!”

So the gods eliminated by rationalization return in a different form to rule over us. In the political sphere, Weber describes how nation-states employ rationalized violence to protect borders, pushing religious scruples—like the Sermon on the Mount—into the

private sphere of values. But war then out-religions religion, creating a new form of devotion to the nation-state. “War... makes for an unconditionally devoted and sacrificial community among the combatants and releases an active mass compassion and love for those who are in need...” Weber also argues that the state does a better job than religion at giving meaning to death. So even Weber doesn’t buy the disenchantment narrative the way it’s usually sold.

Weber is not alone. There is a whole raft of scholarship on nationalism as a religion. Carolyn Marvin argues that “nationalism is the most powerful religion in the United States, and perhaps in many other countries.” Religion is here understood as Durkheim understood it: as a kind of collective self-worship. Robert Bellah explores the civil religion of the United States which, as he says, “has its own seriousness and integrity and requires the same care in understanding that any other religion does.” Scholars have explored the myths, rituals, and symbols of American nationalism. **11-13** At the 2020 Republican National Convention, Vice-President Mike Pence cited Hebrews 12 but substituted the flag for Jesus Christ: “So let’s run the race marked out for us. Let’s fix our eyes on Old Glory and all she represents. Let’s fix our eyes on this land of heroes and let their courage inspire.” And then there’s this: [Trump as Jesus]

We tend to think of nationalism as a derivative religion because it borrows so much symbolism from Christianity and other faiths. But Marvin argues that nationalism is the real religion of American society, because it controls violence and sacrifice. “What is really true in any society is what is worth killing for, and what citizens may be compelled to sacrifice their lives for.” As President Biden said, “We’ve a lot of obligations as Americans... But only one *sacred* obligation, and that’s prepare those we send to war and care for them and their families when they come home from war.” The self-sacrifice of the American soldier is assimilated to the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ in countless memes. According to a popular one, “Only two defining forces have ever offered to die for you: Jesus Christ and the American Soldier.” The difference, of course, is that the soldier, unlike Jesus, offers to kill for you. [Patton quote?] While the religion of nationalism depends on certain real virtues, like devotion to something larger than oneself and the willingness to sacrifice for a higher cause, it also depends on violence. We must ask what god is being worshipped and what kind of sacrifice it demands.

If we turn from politics to economics, Weber likewise points away from the mere disenchantment of our society. Weber describes capitalism as the height of rationalization, precisely in its depersonalization of transactions. Money, says Weber, is “the most abstract and ‘impersonal’ element that exists in human life.” But Weber adds, “For this reason one speaks of the rule of ‘capital’ and not that of capitalists.” Humans are not in charge, but are being ruled by a god of their own making. Making money is no longer a means to serve the life of people. “It is thought of so purely as an end in

itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of... the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational. Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life." Again, elevating our own creations diminishes us.

What Weber means by "entirely transcendental" is that capitalism is not about materialism at all. In this he agrees with Karl Marx's idea of commodity fetishism. By fetishism Marx did not mean that we are materialists, obsessing about things rather than people. He meant that material things become enchanted and take on a life of their own, just as, in so-called "primitive" cultures, fetishes were small carvings that were seen as inhabited by spirits and able to work magic. Furthermore, Marx saw a type of inversion in which material things take on life while life is drained away from people.

When a table is made for use, there is nothing mysterious about it. But when it becomes a commodity for exchange, Marx writes, "it is changed into something transcendent." It becomes a strange thing, "abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties." Objects' value depends not on their usefulness, but on what they can be exchanged for. For example, despite widespread hunger, farmers dump milk and the government warehouses cheese to support the price of dairy. Cheese is not primarily food for people to eat, but a commodity to be exchanged for money. Because their value is expressed relative to other commodities, Marx says, commodities establish social relations among themselves. In the market, commodities take on life and become subjects of relations with other commodities.

Before the industrial revolution, people made nearly everything they had in their homes, or it was made by people they knew. Things were closely linked to their makers and to their use value. Now we make almost nothing, and buy everything. There is no point to romanticizing poverty in the past. But it is hard to overestimate what a change this is in how we relate to the material world and to people. When the sheer volume of things in the world took a quantum leap in the 19th century because of mass production, people needed to be taught, as one advertising manual put it in 1901, that "they have wants which they did not recognize before." People had to fall in love with commodities. Commodities had to be more than things to be used. They had to be enchanted.

If we look at the history of advertising, we see how things took flight from the material world and into the realm of transcendence. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, advertising was informational: you can buy shoes at John H. Johnson's shop. By the early twentieth century, advertising had become more about persuading than informing, but it was still closely related to the physical product. As in this shoe advertisement, the ad showed a picture of the shoe and talked about the virtues of the actual physical shoe: it is comfortable, reasonably priced, well-made, and stylish. By the mid-twentieth century, there was a shift farther away from use value and toward the more intangible and

spiritual aspirations of the consumer for freedom, sex, prestige, recognition, and other forms of transcendence. Now, as in this shoe ad, the shoe still appears, but gone is any appeal to use value. There is nothing about the qualities of the physical shoe, no mention of the shoe at all. Under the influence of Freud and Pavlov, advertisers began to appeal not to the conscious self but to the subconscious. The actual material objects matter less than the fantasy world associated with them. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, as this ad shows, the actual product could vanish entirely. What matters is the brand. In a series of studies published as “Brands: The Opiate of the Nonreligious Masses?” in the journal *Marketing Science*, researchers found that those subjects with strong traditional religious ties were much less likely to choose name brands for products that are used as a form of self-expression. The authors conclude that brand loyalty functions as a substitute for traditional religion.

While objects take on life and gain transcendence, life is drained away from people. Workers are regarded as “labor costs” which need to be minimized. The average wage for garment workers in Bangladesh is currently 30 cents per hour. Marx himself uses biblical language, identifying capital with Moloch, the Canaanite god associated with child sacrifice. This transfer of life from humans to products is captured by Eduardo Galeano’s description of life under free-market military dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s and 80s: “People were in prison so that prices could be free.” Once again, elevating our own creations diminishes us.

This goes on not because we have bad values but because the whole system is set up to render people invisible to us. Outsourcing means that even the corporations that brand and sell products often don’t have direct oversight or knowledge of wages, working conditions, and environmental impacts. For consumers, the modern economy is disincarnated. Shopping on Amazon, we see only products and prices; we click, and then a smiling package simply appears—*abracadabra!*—on our doorstep. All the dirt and sweat and blood and tears necessary to create and move products as efficiently as possible are hidden from the consumer. We don’t see the inside of the Amazon warehouse, where workers are monitored by handheld scanners: 19 seconds to pick the next item four aisles over. Bathroom breaks and other drags on productivity are monitored and punished, and injury rates and turnover are twice the industry average.

This conversion of things into people and people into things is a central concern of the Bible in its critique of idolatry. The idea that inanimate objects come alive by taking life from us is found, for example, in Isaiah 6 and Psalm 115, where those who craft idols out of wood and stone become as deaf and dumb and mute as their creations, though they imagine that their creations take on life. In Isaiah 44, a man uses half a block of wood to cook his dinner and the other half to make an idol, to which he bows down and pleads “Save me, for you are my god!” Though he imagines that the

idol lives, in fact it drains life from him. The narrator comments “All who make idols are nothing.”

Idolatry in the Bible is often but not always the explicit worship of a god; the Bible treats idolatry principally as a matter of behavior, not belief. Idolatry is not primarily considered a metaphysical error, but a betrayal of loyalty to the God of Israel. For this reason, the primary biblical images for idolatry are adultery and political disloyalty. The image of adultery is exemplified by the story of Hosea, who is told to marry a prostitute to symbolize the dalliances of Israel with other gods. The political image is exemplified by I Samuel 8, when the Israelites ask for a king to reign over them. God says to Samuel, “it is not you they have rejected but me, not wishing me to reign over them anymore. They are now doing to you exactly what they have done to me since the day I brought them out of Egypt until now, deserting me and serving other gods” (I Sam. 8:7-8). Although the king is not explicitly worshipped as a god, putting trust in a king instead of in God to protect them is idolatry. Note, though, that God accepts the existence of kings for Israel, as long as they don’t replace God. Idolatry, in this case and in most cases, is on a spectrum; it is not always clear when the line between using creation faithfully and idolatry has been crossed. We are material creatures and we need material things to live; commerce is necessary and good.

Idolatry is when people give an *inordinate* amount of loyalty to something created, rather than to God, even if they don’t do it consciously. Isaiah, for example, accuses the Israelites of idolatry for putting trust in an alliance with the Egyptian army. In the biblical view, anything created can be an object of idolatry. Paul criticizes those whose “gods are their bellies...[and] their minds are set on earthly things” (Phil. 3:19), and warns against “greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god” (Col. 3:5). Jesus warns that you can’t serve both God and Mammon. Idolatry is an attempt to possess God, to create gods in our own image, but inevitably—as Weber, Marx, and the Bible agree—we end up enslaved by our own creations.

But the Bible also implies a more sympathetic account of idolatry. Humans are spontaneously worshipping creatures. In Exodus, the Israelites could stand only a little less than six weeks of Moses’ absence (Ex. 24:18) before they demanded new gods to worship. The Golden Calf story is not just about self-deception, but about our inherent need to worship. The book of Wisdom sees idolaters as searching for God, but getting bogged down in things because God has made them so beautiful. “Yet these people are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. For while they live among his works, they keep searching, and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful” (13:6–7). When Paul is in Athens, the book of Acts reports that he is “distressed to see that the city was full of idols” (17:16). But he also sees their idolatry as evidence that they are searching for the true God. God created everything and is therefore in all things, allowing that people

“would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For, Paul tells the pagans, “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said ‘For we too are his offspring.’” There is a sacramental view of the world here; God can be found in the beautiful things of God’s own creation. And that indicates a remedy for idolatry.

## II. Eucharist

So I will turn now to this sacramental view, specifically the Eucharist, as a way of resisting both the elevation of our creations—the deification of things—and the diminishment of human persons—the reification of people. Let’s start with the deification of things.

One possible response to the deification of things would be to separate God from things: Marx would strip material things of all reference to the divine, but so might a Christian who would opt for the spiritual instead of the material. If separation of spiritual and material is the goal, the Eucharist is counter-productive, because it makes a radical identification of materiality with God, the claim that this particular bread and wine actually become Christ. If fetishization is the investment of divinity into material form, the Eucharist would seem to qualify, which would explain the insistence in some Christian traditions that the Eucharist is only a symbol. Zwingli’s goal was to protect God from idolatry, from getting trapped in the material; some scholars think some Reformers’ sweeping the material world clean of God is the advent of secularization. Those of us from higher liturgical traditions have insisted, on the other hand, that the Eucharist is not the degradation of God but the elevation of the material from mere matter to a sacramental portal to the divine.

Christianity is a certain kind of materialism, rooted in God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. In Christ, God did not disdain material reality but embraced it. Christ is the sacrament of God, the one who reveals God in material form, and thereby reveals the reality of God inhabiting all of creation, including people. “The Word who became flesh imbues matter with a saving potential which is fully manifest in the sacraments.” (JP11) The sacraments are the continuation of the Incarnation, the presence of Christ among us. The Eucharist is a participation in the Incarnation and is therefore certainly an elevation of matter.

Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* on the environment seeks a kind of prayerful contemplation in which God is praised in and through God’s creation. Material creation is neither an end in itself, nor dead matter to be exploited; we are rather to see the beauty of the divine pulsing in the creation God has made. As Francis writes, “The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be

found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things." Francis further emphasizes that "It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation." The Eucharist is an anticipation of the sanctification of all matter, a time when all of creation, both animate and inanimate things, are brought into harmony with one another and with God. Francis continues "In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living center of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life."

But besides this elevation of materiality, at the same time a sacramental view resists making a god of things, because a true sacrament is not an end in itself, but points beyond itself to God. Sacramental life is precisely about how to see God in things without making a God of things. On the one hand, sacraments like the Eucharist take some aspect of material reality—bread and wine, for example—and elevate it into a portal to divinity. A sacramental view of the world uncovers "the dearest freshness deep down things," as Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote. On the other hand, a sacramental view defies treating things as divine, because a true sacrament always points beyond itself to God. Bread and wine both reveal and conceal God. In them God gives Godself in the ordinary without ceasing to be God.

Idolatry is a kind of possession, an attempt to bring God within our grasp. Abundance in an idolatrous economy is having more things. Part of what distinguishes a sacramental view of things from a consumerist view of things is the placing of things into a sacramental economy of gift. The name Eucharist, from the Greek for "thanksgiving," indicates as much. The elements of bread and wine—"fruit of the earth and work of human hands"—are received both from God's creation and from the laborers who fashioned wheat and grapes into their current form. Christ takes these gifts and makes them the form of his own self-giving. Our task is to receive them gratefully and continue the circulation of gifts by giving to others. Circulation, not accumulation, is the point of a gift economy. Abundant life is not possessing more things but participation in the common good, the circulation of goods to all. The offertory is not giving to God what we possess but rather a recognition that all belongs to God, and we can only bring the gifts we have received; bringing up "the gifts" at the offertory is our participation in the circulation of gifts that God inaugurates. I have attended Mass in a Nigerian village in which the congregation comes dancing one by one to the altar bearing yams, bowls of rice, cash, even live chickens. All of the people's material life is included in the Eucharist; it is a blessing of all creation. While idolatry reaches up to grasp God, in the Eucharist we receive God, and everything we have, as a gift.

But this healing of the deification of things doesn't work if it does not simultaneously heal the reification of persons. For Jesus, table fellowship was radically inclusive of outcasts, leading the Pharisees to complain that Jesus ate and drank with

tax collectors and sinners (Lk. 5:30). In John's version of the Last Supper, Jesus washes the disciples' feet and commands them to do the same to others, a sign of profound love, respect, and humble service toward persons in their uniqueness.

For Paul, the Eucharist offers resources for resisting the diminishment of persons by incorporating them into the body of Christ. In the Eucharist, the body of Christ is both what we eat and who we become. The act of consumption is curiously inverted. Augustine puts God's word to us in this way: "I am the food of the fully grown; grow and you will feed on me. And you will not change me into you like the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me." In the Eucharist God eats us alive, but only toward the end of incorporating us into a bigger self. Rather than isolating us into a relationship with things, we are pulled into a larger body, one in which, as Paul says, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" There can be no throwaway people, because we are members of the same body. Indeed we are to consider the weakest members as indispensable, Paul says, and we are to give the greatest honor to the most inferior members (I Cor. 12:21-24).

In I Corinthians 11 Paul chastises the community for coming together to eat the Lord's supper, but neglecting to share their food. Ignoring the hungry according to Paul is not just a lack of charity toward others but a failure to "discern the body" (11:29), a failure to see that we all participate in the same circulation of gifts in the body. Indeed, we share the same nervous system. Says Paul, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (I Cor. 12:26). Acts 2 describes this unity in economic terms: the early Christians not only broke bread together but shared all their possessions in common, distributing goods to all in need.

Those hidden by our system of production and consumption, as well as those excluded and scapegoated by our nationalism, are not only to be included in this sacramental economy; they are themselves sacraments of God's presence. The fetishism of commodities is countered by the sacramentalization of the exploited and hidden people who produce commodities for our consumption. The self-worship of nationalism is countered by the sacramentalization of those labeled internal and external enemies of the sacred "we." The marginalized as sacrament of Christ is revealed in Jesus's telling of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. There the Son of Man identifies himself not with those who do good but with the "least of these brothers and sisters of mine," those who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, or imprisoned. God comes to us in material form in people, especially vulnerable people, those whom Latin American theologians call the "crucified people," who are living icons of Jesus Christ. There is a strong congruence between the sacrament of the Eucharist and the story Jesus tells here; those who would be assimilated to Christ's body in the

Eucharist must see the weakest as the most honored members of Christ's body, and therefore as part of their very own body.

For a couple of years I lived in a poor area of Santiago, Chile, during the military regime in the 1980s. Torture, surveillance, and disappearance were common tactics used to implement the regime's vision of a body politic of isolated individuals subject to an authoritarian government and a "free" market. With advice from free-market economist Milton Friedman, labor unions, political parties, and other types of social organizations were disbanded or suppressed. The church became the main locus of resistance to the regime, the only space for people to organize. But the church was divided, as it always is: torturers and tortured approached the same altar. To address this scandal, a group of bishops issued a declaration of excommunication for anyone involved in torture. More than only symbolic, the declaration brought the regime's clandestine tactics to light, and put forth a vision for what Eucharist does and does not mean. The relationship between torturers and their victims is not true communion; Christ is present there with judgment, not blessing. On the other hand, the church supported a network of people building the true body of Christ by visiting prisoners, forming cooperatives, doing human rights advocacy, and more.

What does building Eucharistic bodies look like in our context? My parish has converted an old school building into a hub for migrants, where people, mostly from Latin America, come for clothing, food, counseling, legal help, and spiritual companionship. It has been a life-giving way to connect liturgical life with action, and it responds to Pope Francis' critique of nationalism as idolatry. He writes that encountering the true God "depends above all on our openness to being touched and moved by those who knock at our door. Their faces shatter and debunk all those false idols that can take over and enslave our lives." Francis continues on to name some of the idols that produce migrants and refugees to begin with: markets favoring wealthier countries; wars and weapon-selling by countries which then refuse to accept refugees from the wars they have fueled; an attitude by nations and individuals of "Me first!" when the Gospel commands us to put the last first. The remedy to the ills of nationalism—compassion, sharing the sufferings of others, striving to widen our sense of "we"—is not just an ethical program but a rejection of idolatry and an encounter with the true God. It is an expansion of the body of Christ, God-with-us, and a participation in the circulation of love that is God's life.

Resisting the idolatry of consumerism requires recentering economies on the human person. This may include avoiding Amazon, supporting local businesses and farmers, buying Fair Trade products, investor activism, and concerted political action to support unions and rein in corporate power. Beyond the depersonalized economy there are thousands of cooperatives, worker-owned and worker-governed enterprises, micro-finance, credit unions. The goal of all this is to create a sacramental economy, an

economy that resurfaces the hidden people, contributes to the flourishing of people and the earth, and facilitates the encounter with the living God in things and people. A sacramental economy is driven not by guilt but by joy, a sense that we have agency and are not simply subject to “economic forces” beyond our control.

I want to end with a famous New Yorker who brought together so much of this sacramental vision. In her autobiography Dorothy Day describes her conversion to Christianity in a section titled “Natural Happiness.” Here she describes her life with her atheist lover Forster in a beach house on Staten Island. She treats the reader to long, loving descriptions of the natural delights of living there: walks on the beach, brilliant sunsets, the smell of smoke as neighbors cooked their catch over open fires, the sound of the waves and wind and sea gulls, the taste of coffee and toast, bread and fresh fish, the briny smell of Forster’s lean body as he got into bed. She has equally loving and detailed descriptions of her neighbors. Dorothy credits Forster, a biologist, with revealing the beauty of the natural world to her, and this appreciation of the natural world brought her to faith in God: “His ardent love of creation brought me to the Creator of all things. But when I cried out to him, ‘How can there be no God, when there are all these beautiful things,’ he turned from me uneasily and complained that I was never satisfied. We loved each other so strongly that he wanted me to remain in the love of the moment... He cried out against my attitude that there would be nothing left of that love without a faith.”

Forster considered this “morbid escapism,” and “He exulted in his materialism.” But Day was the true materialist, the one who loved the world and everything and everyone in it because it was the handiwork of God. She saw that, far from defending the integrity of the material by denying God, the material was reduced to nothing without God. She did not want to negate this world in favor of heaven, but to recognize heaven on earth.

After her embrace of Christianity, Day writes, “How I longed to make a synthesis reconciling body and soul, this world and the next.” That synthesis was the Catholic Worker movement, which draws out the earthly consequences of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. Based in the practice of daily Eucharist and a reading of Matthew 25, Dorothy Day saw the hungry, the thirsty, the imprisoned, the foreigner, and all the poor as sacraments of Christ, the supernatural shining through the lowliest form of the natural. She said of her daily Eucharist, “You go because you need food to nourish you for your pilgrimage on this earth. You need the strength, the grace, that the bread of life gives.” But Christ was not only found in the bread, but in those looking for bread. “Christ is with us today, not only in the Blessed Sacrament, and where two or three are gathered together in His Name, but also in the poor.” Rather than abdicate care of one’s neighbor to an impersonal state or market, Day created Houses of Hospitality that welcomed each guest as Christ, regardless of their relationship to the

church. All people, Day frequently wrote, were members or potential members of the Mystical Body of Christ; she had a strong sense of the unity of all humanity, which is precisely why violence was unthinkable.

Dorothy Day's resistance to today's idolatries came from a deep practice of the sacraments and practice of love and solidarity with those who suffer. Day did not shun the world; her eschatology is rather captured by her favorite quote from Catherine of Siena: "All the way to heaven is heaven." We cannot wait for the eschaton, but must live now as if heaven is already here among us. And that's what it means to live eucharistically.