

The Communal Dimension: Learning to become the Beloved

Part II of The Eucharist: Encountering the Beloved

Bellarmino Lenten series

Emily J. Besl

March 2017

March 6- *The Mystical [personal] dimension: The embrace of the beloved*

Jim Schutte

A focus on the mystical dimension, the experience of intimacy with the Beloved each time we receive the Eucharist in the assembly. Also, a fresh understanding of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

March 13- *The Communal dimension: Learning to become the beloved*

Emily Besl

How do the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist help us learn to become the beloved? Presenter with parish members

March 20- *The Social Dimension : Living as the beloved* (transformed and sent) **Elizabeth Groppe, XU**

March 27- *Celebrating a Meal* Parish members with refugee and “re-entering” guests

April 3- *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation*

II. The Communal Dimension: Learning to become the beloved

Summary: All liturgy trains us to become Christians. Especially Eucharist; we do this every week, year in and year out, over and over, every “Lord’s Day.” We do Eucharist not only to be followers of Jesus, but also to become more and more what we were made in baptism: the body of Christ, to “grow into the full stature” of Christ (Eph 4:13). Celebrating the Eucharist trains us to do Christ’s mission, a mission of reconciliation, of unity between God and humanity, and among all people. In the Eucharist, we are formed into one, to carry out this mission.

We are transformed by *doing* liturgy, by carrying out rituals. Word & Eucharist form the basic structure of Eucharist. How do these form us into Christ? The dynamic of Word and Eucharist train us to relate to God as Jesus did. First, by doing the Liturgy of the Word, we are trained in listening, in being receptive, to God, as Jesus was. We join Jesus in listening to the Father. Then, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we join Jesus in self-offering. Especially by participating in offering the Eucharistic Prayer, we are trained to offer ourselves with and in and through Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the Father.

INTRODUCTION

A. EXAMPLE OF RUNNING

1. “Flunk your twenties” for Millennials -- if not vegan for a while and run a marathon
2. How to prepare to run a marathon?
 - a. read? talk? watch video?
 - b. learn to run by running

B. LIKE LITURGY

1. although it may seem like it is entirely different -- training for a marathon is like liturgy
2. like a runner who trains by running over and over again,
3. we do liturgy again and again,
4. not so much to learn how to do liturgy
5. but to be trained in the Christian life, in the life of Christ

I. LITURGY AS TRAINING

A. REPETITION

1. we can get a sense of this by fact that liturgy is so repetitive
 - a. every year about this time, we do season of Lent
 - b. for every child born in our communities, do Rite of Baptism for Children
 - c. for every couple wed, Order for Celebrating Marriage
 - d. and every Sunday – Mass; *Lord’s Supper on Lord’s Day*
2. we don’t have to come up with something new
 - a. not have to be creative, imaginative
 - b. can do what our ancestors did, for generations and generations
3. like someone training for a marathon, we return to the liturgy

B. RITUAL

1. one reason our liturgy is so repetitive = because it *is* a ritual
2. but rituals are not just an action we repeat over and over
 - a. in common use, people may refer to their customary habits as a “ritual”, as in “my morning ritual”
 - b. these repeated actions are better described as routine
 - c. they are repeated (one aspect of a ritual) but they are done by an individual
3. rituals are actions done by a *community* – and the actions are *symbolic*
 - a. a meaning within the words and actions
 - b. a meaning we absorb little by little, over time
 - c. a meaning we acquire gradually over months, years.
 - i. true for all rituals: ethnic, families, groups like schools or scouts
4. our liturgy is a ritual
 - a. we say the same words over and over
 - i. until we begin to understand them
 - b. we do the same actions again and again
 - i. until we begin to see what they mean¹
5. in this way, doing the liturgy is transformative
6. we “learn” through liturgy -- not an intellectual, but like learning to run, to DO

C. TRANSFORMATIVE

1. we celebrate to learn, to be *transformed*
 - a. to be *changed*
 - b. to let the liturgy sink into our hearts and into our bones
2. not in the sense of learning the rubrics, or doing liturgy “correctly”
3. but in the sense that what is at the center, the core, of liturgy
 - a. becomes part of us
4. that is: *paschal mystery*

¹ Mark Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple*, Liturgical Press, 1980

D. PASCHAL MYSTERY

1. Paschal mystery: dying and rising of Christ
 - a. not just an historical event 2000 years ago
 - b. but also as the pattern by which we live
 - c. that *Christ lives out in us*, in the Church

2. in liturgy (every sacrament, every Liturgy of the Hours, but esp in Eucharist)
 - a. Christ makes present his dying and rising
 - b. to draw us ever deeper into that mystery
 - c. to change us, transform us
 - d. so that we may offer ourselves, give of ourselves
 - e. as Christ the Beloved did, on the cross

3. in the liturgy, esp the Eucharist, Christ transforms us
 - a. by power of Holy Spirit present among us
 - b. into Christ's Body, into Christ

4. in baptism, we were first plunged into Christ's paschal mystery
 - a. Lent, these weeks, is the time we prepare to renew our baptism promises at Easter Mass
 - b. but every Mass is a renewal of the paschal mystery in us

5. Eucharist is the *ongoing sacrament of initiation*, the repeatable one
 - a. just as the catechumens and elect among us undergo a training for Christian initiation through the catechumenate
 - b. so our training as Christian is continued each Sunday in Eucharist
 - c. in Liturgy of Word and Eucharist
 - d. we are formed more and more into the one who loves us and gave his life for us

II. TWO MAIN PARTS

A. EUCHARIST – TWO MAIN PARTS

1. so we come to Eucharist every Sunday, to meet Christ in his dying and rising
2. we do the Eucharist, the Mass, a sacred ritual
3. we engage in a ritual,
 - a. a ritual that -- in its very shape -- parallels our relationship with God
 - i. our relationship: *God reaches out* to us
 - ii. *we respond* to this initiative of love
 - iii. *initiative belongs to God*
 - iv. our part in relationship is key, but is in nature of a *response* to prior work of God
4. like all our sacraments, our ritual for Mass comes in two main parts: Word and Eucharist
 - a. Word: God speaks to us, mediated through Scripture
 - b. Eucharist: our response to God's word
 - i. Note: the word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving"
5. in Word and Eucharist, through the rituals we do, Christ transforms us

B. INTRODUCTORY RITES

1. in addition to 2 main parts, also do some rituals at beginning and end
2. these have character of transition –
 - a. they take us *from* our ordinary lives *into* ritual act of worship
 - b. then *from* our worship *to* our lives, to the world we called to serve
3. at beginning, in Intro Rites, *God gathers us together*
 - a. we assemble with one another, not because we thought of it
 - b. but because we are *responding to call of God*
 - c. call & response -- even precedes the main Word & Euch
4. here from the very beginning, we are *trained in the Christian life*, in life of Christ
 - a. gathered into one,

- b. we belong to each other
 - c. Christian life always lived within community, Body of Christ
 - i. GIRM: purpose of Intro Rites = “to establish communion”
 - ii. unity
 - d. we will carry out this Eucharist as Christ’s body, so first we are gathered, summoned, formed into one, so that we can *carry out this ritual as one*
 - e. as members of Christ, serving one another in our roles in liturgy and in life, being Christ for one another
 - f. unity of Body of Christ
5. e.g. greeting: GIRM says purpose is to “*manifest the mystery of the gathered church*”
6. Christ present in [CSL 7] gathered people
7. united as one to become the Beloved

III. LITURGY OF THE WORD

A. GOD SPEAKS

1. In Lit of Word, God speaks to us, and we listen
2. God's speaking is *mediated* through Bible passages,
 - a. and our friends and neighbors, and clergy
 - b. who proclaim the stories
3. might look like just someone you know, reading aloud some ancient literature
 - a. but, sacramentally, in this ritual
 - b. GOD SPEAKS
 - c. this is a ritual dialogue
 - d. we are not speaking *about* God, but we are engaged in *listening to* God

B. TRAINING

1. How is Lit of Word a training?
2. in Eucharist, every Sunday we listen to God's word
 - a. we = attentive, receptive, open
 - b. *doing* Lit of Word -- trains, forms us in these attitudes
3. that receptivity, attentiveness
 - a. -- helps us to do the ritual at that moment
 - b. but also is a formation for our lives, a training

C. TRAINING FOR LISTENING IN DAILY LIFE

1. in our lives, God is present and speaking, reaching out to us
 - a. God is present, but hidden and anonymous
 - c. we don't always recognize voice of God
 - d. we don't encounter God directly, but presence is mediated *through* many ways
2. in Liturgy of the Word, our listening to God through familiar words of Bible
 - a. trains us in the habit of listening, so we can hear God in our world

D. TRAINING TO BE CHRIST

1. this training in listening, in dialogue *with God* = also a formation *in Christ*
2. Jesus, in his human life, lived in relationship to the Father
 - a. Father, reaching out in love, giving of self to his beloved Son
 - b. Jesus, responding back in same self-giving love, to Father
 - c. Father = faithful, giving, loving
 - d. Jesus = learns to trust in faithfulness, steadfast love;
 - i. this is essentially the *paschal mystery*;
 - ii. Jesus accepts even death because of his trust in God's faithful, self-giving love
 - iii. and God raises him up and bestows new life
3. that's what happens to us in Lit of Word
 - a. Sunday by Sunday, as we gather in Christ, in Body
 - b. we listen to God's word
 - c. we hear that same word of faithfulness that Jesus heard, of God's self-giving love [call]
 - d. so we can develop same attitude of trust, of self-giving in return, as Jesus did [response]
4. we learn, little by little, to relate to God as Jesus did; Christ draws us into his relationship with God the Father
 - a. as Jesus Christ was beloved by God, so are we
 - b. we become the Beloved

IV. LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

A. RESPONSE

1. having heard Word [call], then we respond to that word
2. "Eucharist" = thanksgiving
3. Liturgy of the Eucharist is a training in gratitude

B. STRUCTURE OF LITURGY OF EUCHARIST

1. can get an idea that in Eucharist we are formed into Christ the Beloved, even by a quick look at the shape of this part
2. here, in Lit of Euch, *we do what Jesus did* (in response to God's faithfulness)
3. on the night before he died
 - a. Jesus took, blessed, broke, gave -- the bread and wine
 - b. in memory of him, we do the same
 - c. not just as a reminder, or imitation, but as Body of Christ
 - d. Christ does once again, *through our action*, what he did Last Supper
 - e. his sacrifice continues
4. so now *we do the same actions*: we take, bless/give thanks, break, give
 - a. take = Preparation of the Gifts
 - b. bless/give thanks = Eucharistic prayer
 - c. break bread = Fraction Rite
 - d. give = Communion Rite
5. joined to Christ the Beloved of God, we do what he did

C. TAKE

1. we take bread and wine to altar
2. bread and wine comes from us, where we sit
3. bread and wine are a sign of Christ's self-offering, but also of us
4. those who bring forward, sign of all of us, presenting ourselves
5. placing ourselves on altar with Christ, prepared to do what comes next

D. BLESS / GIVE THANKS

1. then, in thanksgiving, we offer ourselves to God, with Christ
 - a. here we learn, are trained, to become the Beloved
 - b. as Christ once offered himself on the cross
 - c. so we offer our lives through & with & in Christ to God

2. What is the offering? What is being offered? Four aspects:
 - a. visible: on the table, can see the bread and wine (1)
 - b. audible: hear the thanksgiving prayer; we offer thanks (2)
 - c. but *unseen*, mediated through the visible and audible = sacrifice of Christ (3), and ours (4)
 - d. Christ draws us into his sacrifice
 - e. we offer ourselves in him

3. attitudes
 - a. in this self-offering, we are *formed in attitudes of Jesus*
 - b. in Liturgy of Word, God spoke of God's faithfulness
 - c. we heard of God's self-giving love, and now we respond
 - d. response = attitudes of "generous giving and profound trust" [Fink]²
 - e. learn Beloved's attitudes of: trust, faithfulness, surrender, self-gift
 - f. we are joined to Christ on cross, in trust that God will raise us in faithfulness as did Christ

4. "we offer you in thanksgiving, this holy and living sacrifice"

"Therefore, O Lord, we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you in thanksgiving, this holy and living sacrifice."³

 - Note: thanksgiving (eucharist) is a response to what God has done

² Peter Fink, S.J. "Living the Sacrifice of Christ," *Worship* (March 1985) 133–48

³ Eucharistic Prayer III

- “memorial” – we remember Jesus’s dying and rising
 - “this holy and living sacrifice” =
 - 1) bread and wine
 - 2) prayer of thanks, Eucharistic Prayer
 - 3) Christ’s sacrifice on the cross
 - 4) our lives of love and service
5. remembering Jesus = trains us in confidence
- a. recalling what God the Father did for Jesus, raising Jesus from the dead
 - i. Prayer: “memorial” of Jesus’s passion, death and resurrection
 - b. gives us confidence that God will do the same for us
 - i. Prayer: “we offer you ... this holy and living sacrifice”
 - c. we remember Christ’s paschal mystery, and then can live this same pattern in our lives,
 - i. “generously giving” of ourselves (as Jesus did)
 - ii. with “profound trust” in God (as Jesus did)
 - d. so “remembering, therefore we offer”
 - e. remembering the past (Jesus’s dying and God raising him), we in the present offer ourselves
6. in Eucharistic Prayer, we learn to become the Beloved
- a. as we are rehearsed in the attitudes of Jesus
 - b. attitudes of responding to God with trust, surrender, self-giving, love
 - c. drawn into Christ’s relationship with God the Father,
 - d. we give ourselves in thanksgiving
 - e. “through him and with him and in him”
 - f. with Christ and IN Christ, formed into Christ
7. “Amen” - we say this at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer
- a. “so be it” (meaning of “Amen”)
 - b. let it be done unto me (like Mary to angel Gabriel)
 - c. yes
 - d. drawn into Yes of Jesus⁴

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Mane Vobiscum*, October 2014, letter to begin Year of the Eucharist in 2005.

E. GIVE

1. God accepts, and changes our offering into Body and Blood of Christ
 - a. then, always giving,
 - b. *offers it back to us* as our food & drink, sustenance
2. we in Mass *give* (communion),
 - a. *through* our action of giving, CHRIST GIVES Body & Blood,
 - b. his very self
3. we learn to become the Beloved here
 - a. we receive his Body and Blood
 - b. to become more what we are: Body of Christ
4. eating the one bread and drinking the one cup, *we become one body*, united
“Grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ.” [Eucharistic Prayer III]
5. unity
 - a. not just to feel good, to enjoy belonging,
 - b. but for mission
 - c. con’t mission of Jesus
 - d. God’s plan of reconciliation - unity with God and among humanity
 - e. our unity as a Church, as a parish, is to embody this unity and let God work through us to bring unity about
 - f. called to be *sign* of unity/reconciliation and *instrument* for bringing about unity
6. communion = trains us to become one Body, trains us in unity
7. but also in service, to continue the self-giving just did in ritual prayer:

F. PLEDGE OF SERVICE

1. think about when receive bread as communion: “The Body of Christ”
 - a. same body recalled in Last Supper story “This is my body, given up for you.”
 - b. at that meal, Jesus identified himself with the bread, food
 - i. food = source of unity - all united in a meal

1. so Christ = source of our unity
 - ii. food = sustenance, nourishes, what keeps us alive
 1. so Christ = our sustenance
 - iii. food = not exist for itself, but to be eaten, consumed
 1. so Jesus gives himself for others, for us
 2. as bread broken that night
 3. so will his body be broken next day on cross
 - c. we receive that bread, "The Body of Christ." "Amen."
 - i. we promise to also be broken for others
 - ii. Amen = a pledge to give of ourselves with Christ
 - iii. promise to be Christ in serving others
 - iv. to surrender our lives in love
 - v. to give, as Jesus gave himself
2. at that Last Supper, Jesus said, "Take and drink, this is my Blood, poured out for you."
 - a. He identifies himself with the cup of wine = his blood
 - b. his blood poured out on the cross
 - c. as he poured out his love for others all during his life
 - d. "The Blood of Christ." "Amen."
 - i. a pledge to give of ourselves with Christ
 - ii. promise to pour out ourselves for others
 - iii. to become the Beloved

CONCLUSION

A. BECOME THE BELOVED

1. like someone who learns to become a runner by running, again and again
 - a. we learn to become Christ the Beloved of God
 - b. by joining ourselves to Christ in doing the liturgy,
 - i. by doing the Eucharist
 - ii. “through Christ our Lord”

2. Week by week, Sunday by Sunday, we are trained by doing this sacred ritual
 - a. in Liturgy of the Word, to join Christ in listening to God speak
 - i. to become with Christ the Beloved of God the Father
 - ii. with Christ, we hear word of faithfulness, love, self-giving
 - iii. to learn the pattern of listening, of receptivity, of attentiveness
 - b. in Liturgy of Eucharist, to offer ourselves through and with and in Christ
 - i. to relate to God as Jesus did, as the Beloved one
 - ii. trained in Christ’s attitudes of trust, surrender, self-gift
 - iii. to let ourselves be broken, to be poured out for others

3. to live out ever more the mission we received in baptism,
 - a. to be the body of Christ
 - b. to become the Beloved
 - c. who constantly reaches out to extend that love to all