

# *Do This In Memory of Me:*

## Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist

*Report of the Fifth Phase of the International Commission for Dialogue  
between the Disciples of Christ and the Catholic Church (2014-2018)*

### The Status of This Report

The Report published here is the work of the International Commission for Dialogue between the Disciples of Christ and the Catholic Church. Commission members for the Disciples of Christ were appointed by the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and for the Catholic Church by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.<sup>1</sup> The authorities who appointed the participants have allowed the report to be published as a study document produced by the Dialogue members so that it may be widely discussed. It is not an authoritative declaration of either the Catholic Church or of the Disciples of Christ, who will both review and evaluate the document.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. "Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist" was the topic chosen for the fifth phase of dialogue. This phase was co-chaired by the Most Reverend David Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, WI, USA, and the Rev. Dr. Newell Williams, President of Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, USA. This is the first time in which exclusive attention was given to the two churches' common emphasis on the Lord's Table. The theme of formation and transformation by the Eucharist has enabled the Commission to deepen its shared understandings, as well as highlighting some of the different ways in which Catholics and Disciples<sup>2</sup> have characteristically expressed them.

2. Disciples and Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the highest moment of their spiritual journey as Christians. At the Eucharist, they encounter Jesus Christ, hear the Gospel proclaimed, deepen their communion with God and with one another, and are prepared and strengthened for carrying out the mission of the Church in the world. Each Sunday ("the Lord's Day"), Disciples and Catholics are invited to renew and deepen the implications of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC) is a council of 19 national member churches from around the world, known as Disciples of Christ or Churches of Christ, which also includes United and Uniting Churches where Disciples have been part of the unions. Though not a legislative body, the DECC works to enable its member churches to consult with each other about issues of faith, witness and unity. The PCPCU, a department of the Roman Curia, has the competence and the task of promoting full communion with other Churches.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this text we use the first person plural "we" to refer to the Commission, and "Disciples and Catholics," or variants of that, to refer to statements about our two Churches.

Eucharist for their daily lives, especially, to be formed and transformed in the likeness of Christ. In this phase of our dialogue we have sought to give more substance to the conviction expressed by our predecessors in the second phase that our affirmations may be “the expression of a very profound communion in some of the most fundamental gifts of grace of God.”<sup>3</sup>

3. Catholics and Disciples agree that “the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist.”<sup>4</sup> Catholics believe that “the Church draws her life from the Eucharist.”<sup>5</sup> Disciples maintain the centrality of the Eucharist as the origin of their movement which began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: Disciples recognize that “the Lord’s Supper is a means by which we (Christians) are nourished by the love of God in Jesus Christ and through that love are made one with one another and with the Church Universal.”<sup>6</sup> Since the emergence of the Disciples as a distinctive church in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Disciples and Catholics had been essentially isolated from each other; indeed, many Catholics have had no knowledge of or experience with the Disciples prior to our international dialogue that began in 1977. From its beginning, the goal identified for the dialogue is the full visible unity of our churches expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist.

4. It is important to remember that there was never a point at which Disciples separated from the Catholic Church, nor are there any mutual condemnations between them that need to be revoked. Nevertheless, the Churches out of which the Disciples movement grew (a variety of Presbyterians and, to a lesser extent, varieties of Baptists) were already separated from the Catholic Church. There is still a journey of reconciliation to be made to achieve full communion.

5. The participants in the Dialogue hope that by exploring the respective celebrations of the eucharistic liturgy as the essential point of reference in each tradition, their joint reflections on such a fundamental theme such as “the Eucharist forming and transforming Christians” will help Disciples and Catholics to know one another better as brothers and sisters in Christ. We believe that this growing mutual understanding will also be helped by a joint study of Scripture, by theological reflection, and by exploring the ways in which each church prepares its people for participation in the Eucharist and its implications for living out the Eucharist in daily life. The experience of praying together and participating in each other’s liturgy (as much as possible) heightened the awareness of how much is shared in common, and also the pain of not yet being able to celebrate together the Eucharist.

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<sup>3</sup> “*The Church as Communion in Christ*” (1982-1992), Report of the Second Phase of the International Disciples of Christ/Roman Catholic Dialogue, in: *IS 84* (1993/III-IV) pp. 162-169; *Call to Unity*, pp. 8-17, para. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 134.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> *The Church for Disciples of Christ: Seeking to be Truly Church Today*, ed. Paul A. Crow, Jr. and James O. Duke, (1988) new edn, ed. Robert K. Welsh, Commission on Theology, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Lucas Park Books, St. Louis, MO (2008), p. 133.

## II. DIALOGUE AS A JOURNEY AND PILGRIMAGE

6. “Unity will not come about as a miracle at the very end. Rather, unity comes about in journeying; the Holy Spirit does this on the journey. If we do not walk together, if we do not pray for one another, if we do not collaborate in the many ways that we can in this world for the People of God, then unity will not come about!”<sup>7</sup> This statement of Pope Francis, at the conclusion of the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, occurring at the same time as the first session of this phase of dialogue, has been inspirational for the Commission: “Walking together” may well be a metaphor for our dialogue, since our Risen Lord always walks with us in the journey of life.

7. What the crucified and risen Christ once did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24), he now does for us: Jesus himself opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread during each Eucharist. In this biblical passage, Disciples and Catholics have recognized the basic pattern of their eucharistic liturgies that include Christ opening his Word and breaking the bread, and thereby sharing himself in sacrament. By recognizing Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, it is expected that all of us will “go back to Jerusalem” to witness to the Church the personal living encounter with Jesus Christ “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35). The Eucharist is sign and seal of God’s merciful love despite our failings.

8. Disciples and Catholics have been together on the way for more than forty years, with one destination in mind: the one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church. In the meantime, on the way, by dialoguing and praying together, Catholics and Disciples are coming to know each other better by discovering and rediscovering “what the Spirit has sown in the other as a gift for them.”<sup>8</sup> Each of us understands that by participating in the eucharistic liturgy, especially in the reception of Holy Communion, in eating the “bread from heaven” (John 6:30-31; cf. Exod 16:4), Christians receive a food that gives life, strengthens and fortifies them to the point that they can echo St. Paul and say: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

9. This phase of our Dialogue has been the continuation of a journey, a pilgrimage, in which the progression of meetings, conversations, and experiences have changed us. The trajectory from Nashville to Rome, to Bethany, to Calgary, to Bayamón, and to Green Bay can be seen as a series of “Emmaus” stops – not the final goal, but waystations where Christ breaks open his Word and breaks the bread in a series of moments of ongoing revelation of what gathers us, as well as a clearer understanding of what continues to keep us apart.

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<sup>7</sup> Francis, Homily, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, 25 January 2014.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* See also: Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 244: “How many important things unite us! If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us.”

10. The methodological approach has been to examine carefully each other's eucharistic liturgy and practice in a positive way (see Appendix 1). In each meeting, theological and biblical papers were presented by Commission members of both churches and discussed in depth (Appendix 3). Questions were formulated by each team for the other and responses were prepared expressing, as much as possible, each ecclesial tradition. Furthermore, the participants attended the eucharistic liturgies of both traditions in different geographical contexts, thus experiencing as closely as possible the eucharistic liturgy as celebrated locally by each of the two churches, within the bounds of ecclesial discipline. They also were enlightened by joint study of Scripture, and by exploring the ways in which Catholics and Disciples prepare their members for participation in the Eucharist and daily life.

11. The members of the Dialogue have explored together how participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist forms and transforms Christians, precisely because it is Christ who is present and active in Word and Sacrament. Understanding the theology and the practical implementation of our two churches' eucharistic liturgies has thus served as the basic starting point for our work in this phase of dialogue; it has led us to new perspectives related both to common agreements and remaining differences in this pilgrimage toward unity in Christ.

### **III. CELEBRATING THE EUCHARIST<sup>9</sup>**

12. The perspectives on the theology and liturgical eucharistic practices of our two churches serve as the foundation for identifying common agreements and divergences in our understanding of the Eucharist in the formation and transformation of Christians. A complete description of eucharistic liturgies according to the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ is found in Appendix 1.

#### **A. Initial Considerations**

13. Both the Catholic Church and Disciples of Christ base their understanding and practice of the Eucharist on their interpretation of Scripture (especially the accounts of the Last Supper, our Lord's Passion, and Paul's teaching) and on their interpretation of Tradition. Furthermore, both churches insist on the importance of regular celebration of the Eucharist (on Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection) as the central event in the church's worship and life.

14. Disciples and Catholics share a similar structure in celebrating the Eucharist though with certain fundamental differences. One major difference is that Catholics have an order for the celebration, governed by several official documents, such as the General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM]. Disciples communities celebrate within traditional parameters,

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<sup>9</sup> Disciples commonly refer to the Eucharist as the Lord's Supper; Catholics commonly refer to the Eucharist as the Mass.

shaped and guided by worship materials provided at national and local levels, but the local pastor and community have broader freedom to adapt the celebration to local needs. Disciples have also stressed the importance of eucharistic hymns sung before communion, as part of their liturgy.

15. Our Scripture studies (cf. Isaiah 56 and Ezekiel 44) sharpened for us the issue of inclusion or exclusion. This issue reminded us that the Lord's own ministry reached out beyond the house of Israel to the nations of the Gentiles (cf. Psalm 22 and Mark's accounts of the multiplication of the loaves, one directed to a Jewish and the other to a Gentile context). Both Catholics and Disciples feel the pain of our separation and pray for the unity that Christ longs for in his priestly prayer (John 17:21). Our study was profoundly affected by encountering stories of the effects of broken communion experienced by local members in the places where we met. Catholics and Disciples continue to work for full eucharistic sharing with each other as an outcome of this dialogue.

## **B. Liturgical Perspectives: The Order of the Eucharistic Service**

16. Disciples and Catholics see fundamental similarities in their celebration of the Eucharist. This section (III: B) identifies, in order, six fundamental stages of the eucharistic celebration as practiced by Catholics and Disciples of Christ, indicating distinctive perspectives of each church. Then the following section (III: C) provides a commentary on various liturgical and theological aspects of the eucharistic celebration, as practiced in each church.

### **1. Gathering as members of Christ's body in worship**

17. Both Disciples and Catholics gather on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist as an expression of the Tradition of the church. Catholics identify this act of gathering also as an experience of the presence of Christ, who said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20). Disciples also believe that as they are gathered they do so in the presence of Christ, who makes all things one, welcoming to His table all believers from every place and time.

18. Catholics and Disciples recognize that they are members of Christ's Body, and that both are gathered by ordained ministers. Catholics require that the one presiding at the worship is an ordained bishop or priest, who oversees and coordinates the worship by the people. Disciples also place high value on the engagement of the whole people of God in the service and extend this to leadership roles at the Table itself.

19. For Catholics, this moment of gathering is a time also to recognize that sin divides the community. This is ritualized in a Penitential Act which for Catholics does not take the place of the sacrament of penance. Disciples also are aware of this need and provide an occasion within the celebration for confession of both personal and communal sin, with assurance of forgiveness.

## **2. Hearing the word of God**

20. The gathered community listens to readings from the word of God and to a homily. Catholics use the Lectionary for Mass for Sundays, weekdays, and other celebrations that provide a structured engagement with God's word in the Bible and the Sunday eucharistic liturgy. Catholics understand that in the liturgy of the Word, "God himself speaks to his people and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel" (GIRM 29). Hence, the Liturgy of the Word, with its homily, is a moment of encounter between God and his people.

21. Disciples have sought from the beginning to shape their faith and practice upon the accounts of God's dealings with his people in the Hebrew scriptures and in the New Testament. The Revised Common Lectionary is recommended and widely used by Disciples. The sermon is a fundamental part of each Lord's Day worship. In the exposition of Scripture, its meaning is made clear for today, leading to an invitation to join at the Lord's Table and hence to lead lives committed to mission.

## **3. Bringing to the altar bread and wine as well as other offerings**

22. The celebration of the Eucharist involves using the things of earth as found in the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples. Catholics use bread and wine with added water. This is the moment at which gifts for the church and the poor are gathered. Members of the gathered assembly of the faithful bring these gifts to the celebrant who receives them and places the bread and wine on the altar. The bread and wine symbolize the offering of the whole community.

23. Disciples equally bring to the Lord's Table the things of the earth, the bounty of God's good creation, based upon the scriptural accounts of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. (For historical and cultural rather than theological or liturgical reasons, unfermented fruit of the vine is most often used.) Disciples are keenly aware that gifts for the concerns of the world, and especially for the poor and those in need, belong intrinsically to the things brought forward and consecrated to God (though they may be brought forward at another point in the service).

## **4. Praying over the offerings; a prayer of thanksgiving/consecration**

24. Catholics pray a great prayer of thanksgiving, a eucharistic prayer, over the bread and wine offered by the people and placed on the altar table by the celebrant (priest or bishop). The prayer is of the whole community gathered, with the lay faithful and the priest celebrant having different roles in the prayer. The faithful and priest begin and end the prayer in dialogue, and the faithful punctuate the prayer with an acclamation of praise after the preface (Holy, holy, holy ...) and a memorial acclamation after the Lord's words of institution. The priest celebrant proclaims the body of the prayer on behalf of the assembly of the faithful, and always expresses that unity of communal participation by praying "we offer, we ask." Catholics believe that during the prayer, through the working of the Holy Spirit, the bread

and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Ten eucharistic prayers are approved for use in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church.

25. The Disciples' prayer of thanksgiving is shared among the ordained minister (who offers the words of institution from the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper) and the appointed elder(s) of the community. This reflects Disciples' stress on the importance of the participation of the whole people of God in the celebration. That all be done in order (cf. 1 Cor 14:40), texts embodying acceptable practice are provided by the church at regional and national levels.

26. Disciples affirm that Christ is actually present at his Table and that there is a real action of God, through the Holy Spirit, in transforming the elements. Unlike Roman Catholics, Disciples have not developed a single, normative explanation of the metaphysical manner in which this happens; but this does not lessen their lively and true sense of Christ's presence at his Table.

### **5. Receiving the blessed/consecrated gifts as communion in the body and blood of the Lord**

27. After the bread and wine are placed on the altar and prayed over in the great prayer of thanksgiving, the members of the community receive the elements as holy communion. Catholics believe that they receive the very body and blood of Christ under the form of bread and wine. Whether in song or silence, this is a time for communal prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Singing during the time of reception highlights that the members of the community are themselves one Body in Christ. Silent time after communion provides an opportunity for individuals to contemplate the Lord's presence in their lives.

28. Disciples testify that in the Eucharist the bread and wine become for them the body and blood of Jesus Christ, uniting them in Christ to one another: "...as we share in Christ's one body and blood at his one Table, he unites us in one another's sorrows and joys, in our lives most deeply, so that we become together 'citizens of heaven', 'partakers of the promise' (Eph 3:6) of life in communion with one another in Christ."<sup>10</sup> The Disciples' prayer of thanksgiving is usually preceded by a hymn (or hymns) that calls the participants through contemplation, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to share in the communion of Christ's body and blood.

### **6. Going forth to live Christ's life in the world "until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26)**

29. Members of Christ's Body, the Church, do not stay in the church building. Rather, they believe that participation in the Eucharist makes them missionaries of Christ to the world. Strengthened by the word and the sacrament, they continue Christ's work of preaching and

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, Bosworth, Chase & Hall, Publishers, 1871, reprint by ULAN Press, p. 273.

healing. Catholics, in light of Vatican II, embrace a more explicit connection between the Eucharist and mission, to witness and evangelize, and to renew hope both to those within the Church and beyond.

30. Disciples too have been recovering the intrinsic link between the Eucharist and mission and service in and to the world. Responding to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry they have acknowledged that, “Too often Disciples have seen the Lord’s Supper either as only a personal act of worship (between the person and God) or as an internal activity of church life (worship separate from mission), and that they are being challenged to develop an understanding of church which is both sacramental and in mission.”<sup>11</sup> Thus Disciples recognize anew that the world, in all its beauty and brokenness, lies painfully short of what God wills for God’s creation; and that through the Lord’s Supper they are empowered to work that God’s will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Matt 6:10).

## **C. Liturgical/Theological Commentary**

### **1. Centrality of the Eucharist**

31. Disciples affirm the Lord’s Supper as the central event in the church’s worship and life. The service encompasses the whole of their faith: “...the whole service is intended to set forth the whole drama of God’s redemptive work, including at least the birth, life, death, resurrection, exaltation and coming again of our Lord... the whole Gospel is preached in [liturgical] action.”<sup>12</sup>

32. Catholics see the celebration as the central sacramental action of the life of the Church. All other sacraments lead to it or flow from it. The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) says that the liturgy is the “source and summit of Christian life” (SC 10); the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) specifies that it is the Eucharist itself that is the “source and center” (LG 11).

### **2. Frequency of the celebration**

33. Disciples celebrate the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s Day (Sunday). The Supper, celebrated weekly, is the foundation of their life as church. They gladly celebrate the Lord’s Supper on special days in the Christian year other than Sundays and special occasions in the life of the church. It is the weekly Lord’s Day celebration which is, from their beginning,

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<sup>11</sup> “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),” Official Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, in *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* text, ed. by Max Thurian, Vol.1, Faith and Order Paper No. 129, Geneva: World Council of Churches, pp. 110-121, see p. 117.

<sup>12</sup> William Robinson, *The Administration of the Lord’s Supper*, The Berean Press, Birmingham, 1947, pp. 20, 23.



normative for their identity and life.<sup>13</sup> As one of their responses to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry notes, "...we strongly endorse the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper...: 'as the eucharist celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate that it should take place every Sunday.'"<sup>14</sup>

34. Catholics celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday since "the Lord's Day is the first holy day of all"(SC 106). Over the centuries Catholics began to celebrate other feast days and today the Eucharist is celebrated daily.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Christ's presence in the celebration

35. Disciples believe that Christ is present at his Table. They proclaim that Christ is the host and is present at his meal, as stressed in one of their responses to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.<sup>16</sup> They affirm that there is a real action of God, through the Holy Spirit, in transforming the elements so that in receiving them believers receive the communion of Christ's body and blood as he himself declared.<sup>17</sup> This has deep roots in Disciples history; it has been shown that both Thomas and Alexander Campbell were strongly influenced by the Directory for Public Worship produced by the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1644/45. This text, which may be regarded as a starting point for the development of Disciples worship, requires that the minister distributes the elements of bread and wine "having first... shewed that those elements, otherwise common, are now set apart and sanctified to this holy use, by the word of institution and prayer."<sup>18</sup> More recently, William Robinson, quoting an earlier British Disciples editor (David King), stressed that, "The believer receives the bread and the fruit of the vine as such, but at the same time constituted to him the body and blood of his now risen Lord, so associated that to look on them is to rebehold his Saviour's death."<sup>19</sup> In more contemporary language, "...in reenacting the Lord's Supper the line dividing past and present is erased. We become eyewitnesses of, indeed participants in, the event...we join the company of disciples, i.e. the followers of Christ of every time and place, who gather to share this meal with him."<sup>20</sup> The assembled company thereby become the Body of Christ in the world.

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 312.

<sup>14</sup> "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," Official Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, pp. 116-117.

<sup>15</sup> On Good Friday and Holy Saturday no Mass is celebrated.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> "Disciples tended to resist traditions about the eucharist that insisted on precision or detail in explaining Christ's presence. Disciples have continued to resist attempts to explain the mystery of Christ's presence in the eucharist too fully, not because they do not believe it, but because they have wished to avoid divisive controversies over a mystery where a variety of understandings has coexisted in the history of the Church" §36, section 3.2.1. of the Report from the Fourth Phase of Dialogue, *The Presence of Christ in the Church, with Special Reference to the Eucharist*, (2009).

<sup>18</sup> Holy Communion, *Directory of Public Worship*, various editions since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This one is from *Grove Liturgical Studies*, no 21 Grove Books, Bramcote, Notts, 1980, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> William Robinson, *The Administration of the Lord's Supper*, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p. 144.

36. Catholics believe that Christ is really present in the celebration of the Eucharist. The quintessential Catholic statement of this is from the Council of Trent, where the presence is strongly affirmed as “really, truly and substantially,” in Christ’s “body and blood, soul and divinity,” and that this presence is by means of transubstantiation.<sup>21</sup> The teaching has been broadened during the twentieth century by Pius XII in his encyclical on the liturgy *Mediator Dei* and followed by Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, where Christ’s presence is affirmed in the person of the minister, in the eucharistic species, in the proclamation of the word, and in the gathered assembly (SC 7). Paul VI in his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965) nuanced this teaching by saying that each mode of Christ’s presence is “real,” but that the presence in the eucharistic species is preeminent, since it is substantial and permanent (MF 35-39).

#### **4. The usual structure of the Sunday celebration**

37. The Disciples’ service typically includes gathering as a community, receiving and responding to the Word, the use of the words of institution, receiving Bread and Wine at the Lord’s Table, and being sent into the world for mission and service. They stress that Word and Table belong together. They celebrate the fact that, broadly speaking, the structure of our practice accords with that of the Church throughout the ages.<sup>22</sup> Throughout their history Disciples have maintained a clear idea of the basic pattern necessary for the eucharistic service. Already the Directory for Public Worship, noted above, offers detailed guidance for what should be included in the prayers offered at the Table. At certain times and in particular national contexts, greater freedom has been allowed; but official guidance has always been given.<sup>23</sup>

38. Catholics have a similar structure of celebration. In GIRM 28, “There are two parts to the Catholic Mass, the liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, so closely connected that they form but a single act of worship. The people of God are nourished both at the table of the God’s word and at the table of Christ’s body. In addition, there are certain introductory and concluding rites.”

#### **5. The personal character of the Sunday celebration**

39. Disciples believe that the Eucharist is deeply personal. Through their repeated experience at the Table, they are transformed towards the persons they are meant to be. Alexander Campbell wrote that because the Holy Spirit works upon the understanding and affections of

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<sup>21</sup> Council of Trent, Session XIII (1551), Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist, chapters 1 and 4, and canons 1 and 2, in *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 36th edition, edited by H. Denzinger and A. Schoenmetzer (Rome: Herder, 1976), nn. 1636-7, 1642, 1651-2.

<sup>22</sup> Churches Respond to BEM, p.117; The Church for Disciples of Christ, p.145; Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, pp. 330-331.

<sup>23</sup> *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, pp. 148-149.

saints and sinners, Christians perceive, realize, and appropriate the blood of Christ applied to our reason, our conscience, and our will.<sup>24</sup>

40. Catholics would speak about this personal character in terms of the “fruits of the Eucharist.” The first fruit of communion is “intimate union with Christ Jesus” (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], n. 1391), and nourishment for a deeper and more committed life in Christ.

## **6. The social character of the Sunday celebration**

41. Disciples believe that the Eucharist is profoundly communal/social, uniting believers one to another within the one Body of Christ. In the physical act of handing the elements to one another, of sharing them and partaking of them, they own and enact their common allegiance to God and to the Lord and, on that basis, their belonging to one another. In sharing together at the Lord’s Table they say, in effect, “You, my brother (sic), once an alien, are now a citizen of heaven...Under Jesus the Messiah we are one...thy sorrows shall be my sorrows, and thy joys my joys. Joint debtors to the favour of God and the love of Jesus, we shall jointly suffer with him, that we may jointly reign with him.”<sup>25</sup>

42. Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is the action of the Body of Christ, head and members, gathered under the presidency of the ordained celebrant. From the gathering, to the hearing of the word, the presenting of gifts for the church and the poor, the joining of their offering to Christ’s in the eucharistic Prayer, the receiving of Christ’s body and blood in communion, and going forth to minister to Christ in the hungry, sick, and imprisoned – all is an action of the community of believers acting as Christ’s body for the life of the world.

## **7. The participatory character of the Sunday celebration**

43. Disciples stress the importance of the participation of the whole people of God in the eucharistic celebration. Ultimately “...it is not presiding officers of the ceremony but the whole people of God who, in response to the sacrifice of Christ, offer up our own sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, a giving of ourselves to God who brings good news to sinners.”<sup>26</sup> Thus in addition to duly ordained clergy, who typically preside at the service, duly

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<sup>24</sup> cf Alexander Campbell, *The Millennial Harbinger*, Extra, no 8, May 1855, p. 258; *The Millennial Harbinger*, October 1855, p. 508; and December 1855, p. 662. Compare also *Directory of Public Worship*, 1980 ed., p. 21: “How necessary it is that we come unto [this sacrament] with knowledge, faith, repentance, love and with hungering and thirsting souls after Christ and his benefits: how great the danger to eat and drink unworthily.”

<sup>25</sup> Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 273.

<sup>26</sup> *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p 141.

commissioned elders and deacons also have appropriate roles.<sup>27</sup> Guidance for these offices is provided by materials published by the church.<sup>28</sup>

44. For Catholics the Eucharist is a celebration of the whole Church. The celebrant (priest or bishop) leads the faithful in making their offering, proclaiming Christ's great deeds, and joining in his sacrifice. In addition, the Church is understood to include the whole Communion of Saints, who have gone before, marked with the sign of faith and whose voices are joined with those in the congregation in the prayer.<sup>29</sup>

## 8. Participation at the Table

45. Disciples believe that the Table is the Lord's, and not our own, and that it is Christ who invites, and not ourselves. Therefore they stress that all Christians are welcome at the Lord's Table. This does not mean that the Eucharist is a "means" to unity, nor are they simply practicing "eucharistic hospitality." Rather, at the Lord's Table they are already one through Christ's invitation to partake together of his one Body and Blood. This does not necessarily imply full, formal recognition of the church from which a particular Christian comes. Disciples regard full, formal recognition among churches – as important as that is, and as deeply committed to it as they are – as a separate issue, and one which does not preempt the Lord's invitation for all Christians to gather at His One Table. They are and have always been most reluctant to treat any doctrine of the Lord's Supper "as justification for denying sincere and otherwise worthy Christians the right to partake of the sacrament or for barring the way to Christian unity."<sup>30</sup>

46. Catholics approach the Eucharist as an ecclesial event. Every sacrament is an act of Christ and his Church through the power of the Spirit. Every Eucharist is a sign of the unity of the community's faith, its worship, and its mission and ministry. "... [T]he Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to full ecclesial communion and its visible expression."<sup>31</sup> For Catholics, where the communion is broken by its members, repentance is needed before inclusion again in the full participation in the Eucharist. Because of the principle of full visible unity, other Christians may not yet receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church,

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p 149.

<sup>28</sup> William Robinson, *A Companion to the Communion Service: A Devotional Manual*, The Berean Press, Birmingham, reprint from Oxford University Press, 1942; Gordon Robert Stirling, *Down to Preside*, Federal Literature Department of Churches of Christ, Melbourne: 1976; Keith Watkins, *Thankful Praise: A Resource for Christian Worship*, Christian Board of Publication, St. Louis, Missouri, 1987; Keith Watkins, *The Great Thanksgiving: The Eucharistic Norm of Christian Worship*, Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 1995; Douglas B. Skinner, *At the Lord's Table: Communion Prayers for All Seasons*, Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 2006; *Cáliz de Bendiciones. Himnario Discípulos de Cristo*. St. Louis, MO, CBP, 1996.

<sup>29</sup> See the Prefaces of the Eucharistic Prayer; *GIRM* 78; the celebration of the Eucharist led by the bishop surrounded by his presbyterate and the people of the diocese is the preeminent form of celebration: see *SC* 41; *CCC* n. 1369.

<sup>30</sup> *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p. 138.

<sup>31</sup> Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism [Ecumenical Directory]*, March 25, 1993, 129.

nor may Catholics yet receive Holy Communion in other churches, except in particular, specified circumstances.<sup>32</sup> The division between Catholics and Disciples remains a painful reality for Catholics who pray that all may be one in Christ one day, and continue to work for full eucharistic participation with the Disciples as an outcome of this dialogue.

### **9. The missionary character of the Sunday celebration**

47. Disciples believe that the Eucharist leads inexorably to mission and service in and to the world. “The Lord’s Supper is an anticipation, and indeed a foretaste, of the joyful festal meal celebrating [Christ’s coming again]... It directs us toward that age when we live together, as God would have us do, in justice, harmony, peace, and joy... the foretaste of joy which we experience at the Table is not only a comfort to us but also a challenge. It prepares us to undertake our mission of witness and service in the world.”<sup>33</sup>

48. Catholics share this mission orientation, though they speak of it in different terms. The Eucharist commits the faithful to the poor. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the collection includes “Gifts for the church and the poor” (GIRM 73). Pope Benedict spoke eloquently of this dimension of the Eucharist in his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007): “We cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the Eucharistic form of the Christian life” (Sac Car 84). Ultimately, every celebration of the Eucharist is a “pledge of the glory to come,” as expressed by St. Thomas Aquinas in one of his antiphons for vespers for the feast of Corpus Christi, *O sacrum convivium*: “O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. Alleluia.”

## **IV. WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THIS PHASE OF DIALOGUE?**

49. Among the international theological dialogues that the Catholic Church conducts with other Churches, there are several where there is a common emphasis on the primary importance of the Eucharist, especially weekly Eucharist. In the majority of these there is also a similar understanding of the essential connection between an episcopal ordering of the Church and the Eucharist. Given that the Disciples do not have such an episcopal ordering, the dialogue between the Catholic Church and Disciples of Christ is rather different. The particular emphasis by Disciples on the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper that is inclusive in practice has had a significant influence on their determined effort to work for Christian unity. Disciples do emphasize the preaching of the Word; but, unlike many other Protestants who give primacy to “pulpit fellowship,” Disciples also emphasize “table fellowship.”

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-142.

<sup>33</sup> *The Church for Disciples of Christ*, p. 142.

50. This phase of the dialogue has achieved consensus that the weekly celebration of the Eucharist is fundamental to an understanding of the Christian life, especially with regard to the ways the Eucharist forms and transforms those who celebrate. Other areas of consensus in the dialogue include:

- i. The Eucharist is a weekly celebrating and recalling of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Lord's Day – the day of resurrection. This is the heart of the Gospel the Church is commanded to proclaim (cf. Matt 28:16-20).
- ii. Participation in the Eucharist is a means of grace for all.
- iii. Regular participation in the eucharistic celebration is a central element in the formation of all Catholics and Disciples.
- iv. The Eucharist is a transforming action in each of our traditions.

51. In different ways we affirm that the Eucharist expresses the unity of the Church. For Catholics it is an expression of the full visible unity that is already present; thus where there is not yet full visible unity other Christians may not receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church except in particular, specified circumstances (cf. Ecumenical Directory 122-136). They may nevertheless share in the other liturgical rites. For Disciples the Eucharist is an expression of the unity given by God through our common baptism into Christ and into his one Body, the Church. It is the Lord who invites Christians to His Table, and therefore Disciples believe they have no warrant to exclude baptized believers from the Lord's feast.

52. During the meetings of this phase of dialogue, several further common affirmations were identified:

i. General Affirmations

Both Churches affirm that the whole universe reflects the glory of God (John 1:3); by the action of the Holy Spirit the ordinary things of earth may convey divine realities. From this sacramental principle specific liturgical rituals have developed, such as Baptism and Eucharist, where water, bread, and wine draw us into an encounter with God. Furthermore, the way in which water, bread, and wine are made significant in liturgical actions has its own integrity, which has its own "logic" and "language." This logic and language have to be learned alongside the rational, propositional language of systematic theology. Secondly, both Disciples and Catholics understand themselves as eucharistic communities whose vision is a desire for complete unity of all Christ's followers at the Lord's Table. Thirdly, both Churches share an essential unity through our common baptism into Christ and his one body, the Church. Both Churches recognize each other's baptism, when conducted in the name of the Trinity and with the pouring or immersion in water of the candidate. Fourthly, we both believe our understanding of the Eucharist is based on faithfulness to Scripture, respect for the Church's history and tradition, concern for the

vitality of its corporate worship and spirituality, and commitment to the cause of Christian unity. Finally, celebrations of the Eucharist are formative for both our Churches.

ii. The Eucharist and Baptism

Both Churches affirm there is an intimate relationship between the Eucharist and Baptism. Baptism, performed once for all, signifies a person's incorporation into Christ's one body, the Church, thereby beginning life-long growth into Christ. Participation in the Eucharist, celebrated at least every week, signifies our continuing growth into Christ and into his one body, the Church. Secondly, the power of the Holy Spirit acts in both Baptism and the Eucharist to effect what is signified in each action in response to the prayers of the faithful. The same Spirit accompanies each Christian in living out what they celebrate in worship. Thirdly, there are processes in both Churches to form and nurture faith – itself a gift of the Holy Spirit – prior to the reception of Baptism and the Eucharist, using authorized catechetical material.

iii. The Eucharist Defines our Lives as Churches

Celebrating the Eucharist on the Lord's Day is the core and highlight of the life for members of both Churches. Both Churches have experienced renewal in their eucharistic practice through the Liturgical Renewal Movement, the Ecumenical Movement and, especially for the Catholic Church, the Patristic Movement.

iv. Liturgical Aspects of the Eucharist

Catholics and Disciples both have a communal emphasis in their worship. Each Church seeks, in diverse ways, to include the participation of all the faithful in the service of the Eucharist, as for example by singing hymns and responses, reading from Scripture, and taking part in leading the intercessions. Both Churches face the issues of inculturation, that is, the relation between the timeless truth of the Gospel and the faithful expression of that at different points in local cultures and contexts. This includes the celebration of the Eucharist.

53. We have also discovered several convergences in our understanding of the Eucharist itself:

i. Ecclesiology and Theology

First, we affirm that Christ is present at his Table. Secondly, we understand the Eucharist as an act of remembrance (*anamnesis*),<sup>34</sup> and a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The communion of the faithful is a manifestation of unity, in which we look forward to the end of all things in hope. Thirdly, the Eucharist has the distinctive grace of nourishing,

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<sup>34</sup> The word "remembrance" is preferred here to the more traditional English word "memorial," because "memorial" is often used to describe an understanding in which the Eucharist is only an obedient act of memory, with no implications of (and sometimes a specific denial of) the affirmation that Christ is really present in the celebration.

strengthening, and hence perfecting the faith and unity of baptized believers gathered in worship. Fourthly, we agree that the effects of the Eucharist include: intimate communion with Christ and with one another, and strength to resist sin in our lives. Especially in the celebration of the eucharistic liturgy, the People of God together celebrate, express, and grow in holiness through the liturgical-sacramental life of the Church.

ii. Christian Formation and Transformation

For both Churches regular participation in the eucharistic celebration is integral to Christian formation;<sup>35</sup> thereby Christians are transformed into members of God's kingdom in this world now and in the world to come. Christian formation and transformation are interrelated elements in a process of growth into Christ (Eph 4:15). The frequent experience of the Eucharist transcends all powers of rational argument and persuasion, because it is ultimately caught up in the saving mystery of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Active participation in the Eucharist should be preceded by preparation and accompanied by an expectant faith in the action of the Triune God.

iii. Mission and Service in Relation to Formation and Transformation

The Eucharist carries both personal and social implications. By bringing believers into intimate communion with Christ and with one another, it forms them for service in and to the world. The reception of the body of Christ in the Eucharist draws them into the self-giving of Jesus on the cross, and thus calls its recipients to a self-giving to others within and beyond the gathered community. Participation in the Eucharist transforms them to undertake their mission of witness and service in the world as missionary disciples. Eucharistic celebrations intentionally conclude with a sending out "to live what we celebrate." However, the effects of the Eucharist are not automatic; God's grace has to be inwardly received. Reception of communion becomes the missionary impulse to live out the reign of God both in the "now" and the "not yet" of God's time.

iv. "Until He Comes:" the Eucharist and the Future

Each of the four New Testament accounts of the institution of the Eucharist includes a reference to a future time when Jesus will eat and drink bread and wine with his disciples in the Kingdom of God (Luke 22:16; Matt 26:29; Mark 14:12-25; 1 Cor 11:11-34). The Eucharist is therefore understood as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in the Kingdom of God. Both Churches see a link between this notion of fulfillment in a future time and the transformative effect of the Eucharist.

54. Along the path of a pilgrimage, through dialogue the participants learn about one another – and sometimes unlearn stereotypical views falsely ascribed to the other. In this context,

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<sup>35</sup> Catholics restored an official catechumenate with the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in 1972, and Disciples offer Preparation for Church Membership before Baptism.



Disciples welcomed the Catholic clarification that the Mass is a liturgical re-presentation of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ in a sacramental manner. Catholics also welcomed the Disciples' clarification that their Communion Services followed a definite pattern, which might be described as "ordered liberty."

## V. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OF THE DIALOGUE

55. We, the members of the Commission, recognize with gratitude all the gifts we have received through our mutual sharing, reflections, discussions, and prayers during this fifth phase of Dialogue. We are confident that, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we are walking together towards the restoration of the unity that our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for on the eve of his passion (cf. John 17:21): we look for the day of our full visible unity. "Precisely because the celebration of the Eucharist is the climax of the church's life, disunity among Christians is felt most keenly at the Eucharist; and their inability to celebrate the Lord's supper together makes them less able to manifest the full catholicity of the church."<sup>36</sup> During this phase, our attendance at one another's liturgies, and our receiving a blessing when appropriate, has taught us much and drawn us closer together. That has also been a joy. Needless to say, our inability to partake together at the Lord's Table has taught us sorrow as well, and moved us to redouble our efforts to overcome our divisions.

56. For Catholics and Disciples alike, the Eucharist plays a central role in the life of the Church. Both also maintain a strongly sacramental view of the world. The topic chosen for this phase, "Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist" represents a common conviction and an urgent pastoral challenge for the two communions today. The reflections offered are the result of a distinctive process marked by seeking to share, as far as possible, an "inside experience" of one another's eucharistic liturgies, practice, and understanding. The attempt was to enter into the "eucharistic world of each church" by rediscovering the profound sense of the eucharistic liturgy in itself, especially in its formative and transformative components. The Commission is convinced that by rediscovering the inner power of the liturgy, a growing awareness of one another's faith and practice could be achieved, especially in our common commitment to and particular experience of the weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

57. By focusing on their eucharistic liturgies, Catholics and Disciples alike have learned much from the other, and much about themselves. Not only have some misconceptions been clarified, but we have begun to understand the inner logic of the eucharistic celebration of each tradition and how much the two traditions share, even though it is expressed in different ways. Our experience is that this dialogue has shown the value of taking into account a liturgical approach to the Eucharist when addressing divisive doctrinal and theological topics.

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<sup>36</sup> *The Church as Communion in Christ*, para. 53(b).

We believe that our experience could be shared by our respective communions if the liturgical approach were made an intentional goal on the part of each church. Undoubtedly, when Catholics and Disciples are celebrating the Sunday Eucharist, they all are expecting to have a living encounter with Jesus Christ.

58. Possible practical outcomes of our journey of dialogue might include several kinds of shared action. We encourage such action on the local and regional/diocesan level in ways that are appropriate.

- Catholics and Disciples are encouraged to meet with each other, perhaps sponsored and hosted in local communities, to get to know each other and share common understandings about Christian life.
- Disciples and Catholics are encouraged to worship together on occasion in ways that are possible to come to a deeper appreciation of the commonalities of their sacramental and eucharistic view of the world.
- Catholics and Disciples are expected to work together to extend the reality of the Eucharist with the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Matt 25:31-46) where they encounter the Christ whom they met in the Eucharist and also in those who are poor and marginalized.
- Disciples and Catholics are encouraged to provide spiritual support to those in mixed marriages and to recognize the gifts these families may offer.

59. We also are aware that Catholics and Disciples share pain at the reality of their separation, especially at the eucharistic celebration. This awareness may move these communities to mutual repentance and forgiveness. Our dialogue has made us aware that acknowledging the pain can open paths of healing and eventual reconciliation.

**60. The Commission is convinced that for both Catholics and Disciples of Christ, the Holy Spirit has an essential role in the sacramental life of the Church. Exploring the work of the Holy Spirit, especially in baptism and the Eucharist, may provide us with a promising framework to further the positive work we have done during this phase of the dialogue, and to explore those areas where we have not yet reached agreement.**

61. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the Disciples of Christ - Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue. The members of the fifth phase wish to acknowledge with gratitude the effort made by our churches, numerous theologians, and biblical and liturgical scholars who, as an expression of their love for the church, have offered their expertise, helping Catholics and Disciples around the world to overcome mutual ignorance, clarify misunderstandings, and grow in communion as brothers and sisters in Christ. In this sense, we acknowledge with gratitude, the dedication, relevant contribution, and tireless efforts of Professor Margaret O’Gara, who was a Catholic member of the Commission from 1982 until the end of her life in 2012. We also wish to recognize the efforts made by those who read, study, and evaluate our texts. We affirm that every step on our pilgrimage has been important, every effort has been necessary, even as we reaffirm the

ultimate goal and destination of our dialogue: nothing less than the full visible unity of our two communions, expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist.

## **Appendix 1. The Eucharistic Liturgy According to the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ: Descriptions of Each Service, Comparative and Interpretative Comments**

### **A. Catholic Celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy**

This description of the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist flows from the exploration of the variety of modes of presence of Christ in the liturgical celebration and beyond. Engagement with Christ in whatever way he is present at a given moment of the liturgy is a source of formation and an impetus of transformation for those celebrating.

1. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist provides us with a framework for thinking about moments of formation and transformation for Christians.

a. This reflection is based on the Vatican II liturgical constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC] 7 on the manifold ways that Christ is present in the liturgy: “To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, ‘the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,’ but especially under the Eucharistic elements.... He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is presently, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’” (Matt 18:20).

b. Paul VI’s encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* [1965], nn. 34-39, takes this teaching and expands it: “Christ is present in his Church when it prays .... He is present in his Church as it performs works of mercy .... He is present in his pilgrim Church longing to reach the harbor of eternal life .... In yet a different but most real way, he is present in the Church as it preaches.... He is present in his Church as it shepherds and guides the people of God .... In a manner even more sublime, Christ also is present in his Church when it offers the sacrifice of the Mass in his name .... These ways in which Christ is present fill the mind with wonder and present the mystery of the Church for contemplation. But there is another, indeed most remarkable way, in which Christ is present in his Church in the sacrament of the eucharist.... This presence is called the *real presence* not to exclude the other kinds as though they were not real, but because it is real par excellence, since it is substantial, in the sense that Christ whole and entire, God and man, becomes present....”

c. These understandings are summarized in the *GIRM* (2002), the normative description of the celebration of the Mass, in n. 27: “At Mass or the Lord’s

Supper the People of God is called together with a Priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord or Eucharistic Sacrifice. In an outstanding way there applies to such a gathering of the holy Church the promise of Christ: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst’ (Matt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and uninterruptedly under the Eucharistic species.”

2. This is a description of a Sunday celebration. A weekday celebration would be simpler.
3. The members of Body of Christ, the faithful, come together from their various lives and responsibilities, from their various experiences of grace and sin, of growth and challenge.
  - a. This group of people forms the Body of Christ for this celebration of the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper.
  - b. Those assembling include the priest celebrant, other ministers, and the faithful.
  - c. *SC 47* describes this celebration by using a number of different names: “memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection, a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet ‘in which Christ is eaten, the heart is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory given to us’ (quoting the antiphon for the Canticum of Mary at Evening Prayer II of Corpus Christi).
  - d. This group of people is gathered by the Holy Spirit as Christ’s Body to “do this in memory of” Christ.
  - e. The celebration begins with song which forms the community as they express with one voice musical texts that present the mysteries of the liturgy and the season (*GIRM 47*).
  - f. The procession can be interpreted broadly and more narrowly: all the people process to the church from home; the minister of the celebration processes formally through the gathered faithful to the altar.
  - g. The sign of the cross situates the gathering in Christ in his paschal mystery of dying and rising.
  - h. A penitential act reminds those gathered of their need for God’s mercy.
  - i. On Sundays outside Advent and Lent, the “Glory to God” is sung to praise the Triune God.
  - j. An opening prayer led by the priest concludes the introductory rites and gives a context for the celebration. The prayer includes an invitation to pray, a moment of silent prayer for all, the text of the prayer, and the “Amen” of the assembly of believers who thereby make the prayer their own. The Holy Spirit acts in the silence to help shape the prayer of the people.

4. The gathered assembly of believers listens to the word of God proclaimed (God speaks to his people, *SC 7*). *Dei Verbum 21* (1965) speaks about this presence: “The Church has always revered sacred Scripture even as it has revered the body of the Lord, because, above all in the liturgy, it never ceases to receive the bread of life from the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s body and to offer it to the faithful.” In this way, the exploration of biblical texts such as Exodus 16 and John 6 has led us to an awareness of how the hungers of the human heart are filled both by the bread of life, once as manna, now as the flesh and blood of Christ, the “bread of life.”
  - a. The proclamation of God’s powerful acts situates this gathering within God’s plan of salvation, first articulated for the Chosen People and now proclaimed anew to this gathering of the Church
  - b. The readings are usually proclaimed by readers, the Gospel by a deacon, the homily given by the priest celebrant
  - c. On Sundays there are three readings (organized in a three year cycle, year A = Matthew, year B = Mark, year C = Luke)
    - i. Old Testament (in Easter season, Acts of the Apostles)
    - ii. Responsorial Psalm
    - iii. New Testament letters
    - iv. Gospel
  - d. The People spend a moment in silence after the first and second readings in which the Holy Spirit communicates the word to the hearts of believers
  - e. The faithful then respond to the word in a series of ways (which expand beyond the confines of the Liturgy of the Word):
    - i. The initial response is through a psalm (said or sung)
    - ii. In the homily the priest offers a word to relate the proclaimed Word of God to the lives of those present
    - iii. In the Creed, the faithful align themselves with the inherited faith of the early Church embodied in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith (or the Apostles Creed)
    - iv. In the Universal Prayer, the word is transformed into petitions for the needs of the Church, the world, the needy, ourselves, and those who have died
    - v. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is a sacramental response to the word
    - vi. At the dismissal, the faithful go forth to respond to the word in the lives they live, now shaped by hearing, listening, meditating, professing faith, praying, engaging in the sacrament of bread and cup become Christ’s body and blood, according to the promise.

5. The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows the same sequence of actions that Jesus followed at the Last Supper: He TOOK the bread and wine, he BLESSED them, he BROKE the bread, and he GAVE them to his disciples while he reinterpreted (and changed) them by his words (*GIRM 72*).
  - a. The faithful bring forward gifts of bread, wine, and gifts for the poor.
    - i. They represent all the people, and all that they bring with them to the celebration: hopes and dreams, livelihood, aspirations, and failures
    - ii. The priest accepts these offerings and places the bread and wine on the altar with prayer – the gifts for the church and the poor are placed elsewhere (sometimes on a table nearby)
      - (1) The prayer blesses God for his creative goodness
      - (2) “Fruit of the vine/fruit of the earth, work of human hands” natural things transformed by human intervention (manufacture) to represent those who offer
      - (3) They will become bread of life and spiritual drink
  - b. The Eucharistic Prayer
    - i. The prayer is the center and summit of the entire celebration, led by the priest celebrant on behalf of all the people, whose prayer and offering it is (*GIRM 78*)
    - ii. *GIRM 79* describes eight elements
      - (1) Thanksgiving (by remembering God’s great acts on our behalf in salvation history)
      - (2) Acclamation (four moments: initial dialogue, Sanctus, memorial acclamation after the words of institution, final Amen)
      - (3) Epiclesis (in two parts, before the words of institution asking that the Spirit change the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood; after the words of institution asking that the Spirit changes those who receive communion into Christ’s body)
      - (4) Words of Institution and consecration
      - (5) Anamnesis (remembering Christ’s death and resurrection)
      - (6) Offering (we offer the bread and cup)
      - (7) Intercessions (we pray for the church, with the saints, for the dead)
      - (8) Doxology (ending as we began by remembering God’s wonderful acts on our behalf and acknowledging God’s greatness)
    - iii. Two particularly transformative moments, flank the words of institution and consecration:
      - (1) First invocation of the Holy Spirit: change the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood

- (2) Second invocation of the Holy Spirit: change those who share communion into “one body, one spirit in Christ”
- iv. The prayer is dialogical: the prayer requires interpersonal communication, and involves several relationships: between priest and people and between God and the Church
- v. The prayer flows from salvation history, especially Christ’s fulfillment of the Father’s will. The structure of the prayer, as it moves from *anamnesis* to invocation, reminds us that the God who acted in history acts now in our presence.
- vi. The prayer includes a memorial (*anamnesis*) and an offering: each prayer contains a variation of the thought: “Remembering his death and resurrection, we offer this living bread and saving cup.”
- vii. The prayer is an ecclesial action that includes those in the Church today, those who have died, and those whom we call “the saints,” who still constitute membership in the church. This ecclesial reality is referred to as the “communion of saints.”

c. The Communion

- i. Communion is prepared for by three moments that express both our need for reconciliation and the unity of which communion is the pledge and sign. This tension of the need for reconciliation and the call to unity becomes a way of “discerning the body” as explored in the biblical papers on Isaiah 56 and Mark 6-8:
  - (1) Common recitation of the Lord’s Prayer (voices joined in common prayer)
  - (2) Sharing of the peace (recognizing the unity of the body of Christ that we are with one another)
  - (3) Breaking of the Eucharistic bread (fraction) (“we though many are one body,” 1 Cor 10:17)
- ii. The faithful return to the altar in procession to receive the now transformed bread and wine which have become the body and blood of Christ
- iii. Ideally, communion is under both kinds, consecrated during the Mass (*GIRM* 85).
- iv. Singing during the reception to express our unity vocally (*GIRM* 39).
- v. Silence is recommended after communion (*GIRM* 45, 88)



vi. Communion transforms the baptized more deeply into Christ's body.

## 6. The Dismissal

- a. Announcements made at this moment remind us that our lives are practical and in the world.
- b. The final blessing reminds the community of who they are and what they have become: those blessed in the life of the Lord
- c. The dismissal is not a "throw-away" moment – see the comments under the Liturgy of the Word above. We proclaim the gospel by our lives. Pope Benedict XVI added two new formulas of dismissal that emphasize the mission character of going forth.
- d. The community has gathered precisely in order to be sent, now conformed more closely to Christ's body by this act of participation in God's saving plan.

## **B. Disciples of Christ Celebration of the Lord's Supper**

### **1. Fundamental Components of the Lord's Supper**

Throughout the world, the Disciples of Christ celebration of the Lord's Supper, almost always and most typically, includes the following components (with some variation in their ordering). Disciples understand the service of Word and the service of the Table to be one integrated whole.

- Invocation prayer/the gathering of the community  
for praise, for receiving the gifts of God, and as preparation for service to the world;
- Confession of sin and assurance of pardon  
so that we are reconciled to God, and to one another, as we approach the Table of the Lord;
- Readings from Scripture  
Scripture being the Word of life, and the basis of our faith and life as a community;
- A sermon proclaiming the Word  
the Word being the basis of our faith and life. Directly or indirectly, the sermon should prepare the community for its meal together at the Table of the Lord;
- Pastoral prayer / Intercession  
typically for those in need, and for cares of the day;
- The Lord's Prayer

- as ordained by Christ, and uniting us with all Christians around the world;
- The singing of hymns
  - at several points in the service (for example (a) a gathering hymn of praise, (b) a communion hymn stressing Christ's offering of himself for us and for our world, (c) a "hymn of invitation" aimed at those considering making the confession that "Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16) and desiring further instruction in faith leading to baptism, or becoming a member of that particular congregation, and, (d) a "sending" hymn stressing our mission and service to the world). Hymns are expected to give theological as well as devotional content to the service: we sing our faith! Notably, the communion hymn is a moment of special solemnity and theological import as we gather at the Table of the Lord;
- Receiving an Offering in support of the church's mission and ministry
  - reflecting our commitment to the church, and to its mission and ministry in the world;
- Call to Communion
  - marking the transition from the service of the Word to the service of the Table, and helping the faithful to focus on the events to come;
- Bringing forward (and/or uncovering) the elements of bread and cup
  - a formal presentation of the gifts of God for the people of God, and underscoring the significance and solemnity of the event;
- The words of institution
  - read by the duly-appointed Presiding Minister from the Gospels (Mark 14:22-25, Matt 26:26-28, Luke 22:17-20) or from St. Paul (I Cor 11:23-26);
- Prayer(s) for the loaf and cup
  - offered by duly-appointed Elders from the congregation, these should stress the link among (a) Christ's gift of his own Body and Blood, (b) our belonging together within the One Body of Christ, His Church, (c) our concern for the needs of the world, and, (d) the invocation of the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the body of Christ and to transform the gathered community to become Christ's body offered in service to the world. (See the next section and its reference to the invocation of the Holy Spirit);
- The distribution and partaking of both elements
  - the elements of bread and wine are most often distributed by duly-appointed Deacons, and then passed from person to person where they are seated. On other occasions of worship, the congregation will come forward to receive the elements of bread and wine;
- Post-communion prayer

recalling God's gracious gifts, and reminding us of our calling to mission and service;

- We are sent forth to mission and service in the world  
a moment festive, but solemn: the service is ended, but continues as we are sent forth for mission and service to the world.

## **1. As Experienced in Practice: A More Detailed Order of Service for the Lord's Supper (cf. suggested Lord's Day services in *Chalice Worship*)**

The following order of service reflects widespread practice in North America.

### **a. The Community Comes Together**

- Opening Music
- Call to Worship/Invocation of God/the Spirit's Presence
- Hymn of Praise
- Prayer of Invocation, including of the Holy Spirit
- Confession of Sin and Assurance of Pardon

### **b. The Community Proclaims the Word of God**

- Many Sunday services now include a children's sermon
- Brief Prayer for Illumination
- Readings from Scripture, typically including one from the Old Testament and one from Acts or an Epistle
- Response
- Reading from the Gospels
- Sermon

### **c. The Community Responds to the Word of God**

- Hymn
- Pastoral Prayer: Praise to God, prayers for the churches and the church, and for their unity, prayers for the world, concerns of the congregation
- Musical Offering

### **d. The Community Comes Together around the Lord's Table**

- Invitation to Communion, including the welcome extended to all Christians to partake of the bread and the cup
- Communion Hymn
- The Lord's Prayer

- The Peace
- The Offering: brought forward and placed on the Table as the Doxology is sung
- The Elements of Communion are brought forward or are unveiled on the Table
- The Words of Institution, accompanied by the breaking of the Bread (leavened or unleavened) and pouring of the Wine
- Prayers over the Elements, including an invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Elements and recipients
- The Sharing of the Elements
- Prayer following Communion

**e. The Community Goes Forth to Serve God in Mission**

- Invitation to Discipleship/Confession of Faith, or Transfer of Membership
- Hymn of Thanksgiving/Invitation
- Benediction and Sending Forth to Service in the World
- Closing Music

## **Appendix 2: Members of the Commission**

### **Catholic members**

Most Reverend David L. Ricken,\* Bishop of Green Bay, WI, USA, Co-Chair, (2014-2018)

Rev. Msgr. Juan Usma Gómez,\* Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City/Colombia, Co-Secretary, (2014-2018)\*\*

Msgr. Dr. Michael Clay, School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., USA, (2014-2018)

Dr. Mary Coloe, pbvm, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia, (2014-2015, 2017-2018)

Dr. Julien Hammond, Ecumenical Officer, Archdiocese of Edmonton, Canada, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. Joseph T. Shenosky, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, USA, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. Michael G. Witzak, School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., USA, (2014-2018)\*\*

### **Disciples Members:**

Rev. Dr. Newell Williams,\* Brite Divinity School, TCU, Ft. Worth, TX, USA, Co-Chair, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. Robert Welsh,\* Council on Christian Unity, Indianapolis, IN, USA, Co-Secretary, (2014-2016, 2018)\*\*

Rev. Dr. Thomas F. Best, Boston, MA, USA, (2014-2018)\*\*

Rev. Dr. Merryl Blair, Stirling Theological College, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia, (2014-2018)

Rev. Dr. James O. Duke, Brite Divinity School, TCU Ft. Worth, TX, USA, (2014-2016)

Rev. Angel Luis Rivera, Latin America and Caribbean Executive, Global Ministries, Puerto Rico/Indianapolis, IN, USA, (2014-2015, 2018)

Rev. Dr. David M. Thompson, University of Cambridge, England, (2014-2018)\*\*

Rev. Paul Tche,\* Council on Christian Unity, Indianapolis, IN, USA, (2017)

*\* Member of Steering Committee*

*\*\* Members of Drafting Committee*

### **Appendix 3: Meetings and Papers**

#### **Nashville, USA (8-12 January 2014): “Introduction”**

Thomas Best, “Citizens of Heaven: the Eucharist and the Disciples of Christ”

Merryl Blair, “Discerning the Body: the Lord’s Supper in Community”

Joseph Shenosky, “The Place of the Eucharist in the Life of the Catholic Church”

David Thompson, “Overview of the Previous Work of the International Dialogue”

Newell Williams, “The Disciples of Christ in One Sentence”

Robert Welsh, “Ecumenical Developments of the Disciples of Christ”

#### **Rome, Italy (14-20 June 2014): “Formed by the Eucharist: The Structure of Liturgies among the Catholics and Disciples”**

Merryl Blair, “Psalm 22 and the Formation of the Eucharistic Community”

Mary Coloe, “The Meaning of the Cross in the Gospel of John”

David Thompson, “Formed by the Eucharist: The Weekly Experience of the Disciples of Christ”

Michael Witzcak, “The Roman Catholic Experience of the Eucharist”

#### **Bethany, WV, USA (20-24 June 2015): “Formed by the Eucharist: The Significance of Eucharistic Catechesis – Knowing by Doing”**

Merryl Blair, “Bread of Heaven, Food for Formation: Exodus 16 in its Literary Setting”

Michael Clay, “The Significance of Eucharistic Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church”

Mary Coloe, “The Bread of Life Discourse: John 6”

James Duke, “Formed by the Eucharist: Knowing by Doing”

#### **Calgary, Canada (17-22 June 2016): “Transformed by the Eucharist: The Eucharist and Relationships within the Church”**

Thomas Best, “Disciples of Christ: Citizens of Heaven, Transformed by the Eucharist”

Merryl Blair, “Isaiah 56: 1-8: A Community Transformed”

Michael Clay, “Transformed by the Eucharist: The Eucharist and Relationships within the Catholic Church”

#### **Bayamón, Puerto Rico (23-28 June 2017): “Transformed by the Eucharist: Living the Sacraments”**

Mary Coloe, “Breaking the Rules: Jesus Transformed by His Experience (Mark 6-8)”

Bishop David Ricken, “Transformed by the Eucharist: Living Encounter with Jesus Christ”

Newell Williams, “Transformed by the Eucharist: Coming Face to Face with the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ”

#### **Green Bay, WI, USA (23-27 June 2018): “Producing the Final Report”**

Mary Coloe, “John 17:1-26: The Missionary Prayer of Jesus”

#### **Appendix 4: Reports from Previous Phases of Dialogue (1977-2009)**

**“Catholicity and Apostolicity,”** (1977-1982), Report of the International Commission for Dialogue between Disciples of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church, in: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service [IS]* 49 (1982/II-III) pp. 65-73; Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), *Call to Unity: Resourcing the Church for Ecumenical Ministry [Call to Unity]*, vol. 3, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2003, pp.1-7. See also: *Growth in Agreement I: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level. 1972-1982*, Faith and Order Paper no. 108, Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, eds., Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984/2007, pp.153-166.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19820601\\_disciples-christ-report-1977-1981\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820601_disciples-christ-report-1977-1981_en.html)

<http://councilonchristianunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Issue-1.pdf>

**“The Church as Communion in Christ,”** (1982-1992), Report of the Second Phase of the International Disciples of Christ/Roman Catholic Dialogue, in: *IS* 84 (1993/III-IV) pp. 162-169; *Call to Unity*, pp. 8-17. See also: *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, Faith and Order Paper no. 187, Jeffrey Gross, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., Geneva: WCC Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1994, pp.386-398.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19921207\\_disciples-christ-report-1983-1992\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19921207_disciples-christ-report-1983-1992_en.html)

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**“Receiving and Handing on the Faith: the Mission and Responsibility of the Church,”** (1993-2002), Report of the Third phase of International Dialogue between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Catholic Church, in: *IS* 111 (2002/IV) pp. 241-251; *Call to Unity*, pp.19-31. See also *Growth in Agreement III*, Jeffrey Gross, FSC, Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, eds., Geneva: WCC Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2007, pp.121-137.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20020522\\_disciples-christ-report-1993-2002\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20020522_disciples-christ-report-1993-2002_en.html)

<http://councilonchristianunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Issue-1.pdf>

**“The Presence of Christ in the Church, with special reference to the Eucharist,”** (2003-2009), Fourth Agreed Statement of the Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue, in: *IS* 141 (2013/I) pp. 27-43. See also *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements 2004-2014*, Faith and Order Paper no. 219, T. Best, L. Fuchs, J. Gibaut, J. Gross, D. Prassas, eds., Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2017, Book 1, pp. 149-167.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20090630\\_disciples-christ-report-2003-2009\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/discip-christ-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20090630_disciples-christ-report-2003-2009_en.html)

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