

## NOTES

### THE EUCHARIST AS THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

In the scriptural tradition represented by Luke and Paul giving the Lord's words at the Last Supper, Jesus tells his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, 25). Study is continually being made on the meaning of this command, sometimes focusing on the various words, "this,"<sup>1</sup> "remembrance,"<sup>2</sup> and "of me."<sup>3</sup> Although in the phrase "Do this" the Lord can be seen to explicitly establish the Eucharist as an *imitation* of his saving actions, in recent years very little serious approach has been made by scholars toward the Eucharist in terms of what is a traditional interpretation of Christian life: the *imitatio Christi*.<sup>4</sup> For that matter, the basic theological relationship between scriptural and Eucharistic typologies has yet to be adequately developed.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, there is among theologians today an ongoing effort to decide, among the various aspects traditionally ascribed to the Eucharist (memorial, sacrifice, thanksgiving, presence of Christ, blessing, etc.), which one ought to be understood as its root theological identity, co-

<sup>1</sup> Léon-Dufour, *Le partage du pain eucharistique selon le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Seuil, 1982) 131; P. Henrici, "Tut dies zu meinem Gedächtnis," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift (Communio)* 14 (1985) 228; F. Chenderlin, "Do This As My Memorial" (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1982) 226.

<sup>2</sup> Chenderlin 228-45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 218-24.

<sup>4</sup> For the most recent study of the theme of imitation in sacramental theology, see R. Kohlhaas, "Das Motiv der Imitatio in der Sakramententheologie," *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 8 (1963) 47-57.

<sup>5</sup> R. M. Davidson, in *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τῶρος Structures* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1981), has solidly established the legitimacy of a typological exegesis of Scripture. Possible indications that scriptural categories of typology were sometimes used by early Christian writers in regard to the Eucharist are the uses of *figura corporis* by Tertullian and Ambrose and its Greek equivalent by Hippolytus, Serapion, and Cyril of Jerusalem. In this regard see H. B. Swete, "Eucharistic Belief in the Second and Third Centuries," *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1902) 173-74; C. H. Turner, "Figura corporis mei" in Tertullian," *ibid.* (1906) 595-97; H. de Lubac, S.J., *Corpus mysticum: L'Eucharistie et l'église au moyen âge* (2nd ed.; Paris: Aubier, 1949) 351-57; C. W. Dugmore, "Sacrament and Sacrifice in the Early Fathers," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2 (1951) 24-37; V. Saxer, "Figura corporis et sanguinis domini: Une formule eucharistique des premiers siècles chez Tertullien, Hippolyte et Ambroise," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 47 (1971) 65-89. For one attempt to work out the theological relationship between scriptural and Eucharistic typologies in the writings of an early Church author, see J. D. Laurance, "Priest" As Type of Christ: *The Leader of the Eucharist in Salvation History according to Cyprian of Carthage* (New York-Berne: Peter Lang, 1984).

ordinating and validating all the others.<sup>6</sup> In Europe the object of this search has been termed the *Formalgestalt* of the Eucharist.<sup>7</sup> The outcome of this discussion has implications not only for liturgical theology but for the Church's pastoral life as well. The Lima document of the World Council of Churches (1982), for example, centers its teaching about the Lord's Supper on five basic images: "thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful, [and] meal of the kingdom," co-ordinating them all under the notion that the Eucharist is "essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup> "Imitation of Christ" is absent from this list of images, as it is from most other listings used in current discussion.

The thesis of my article is this: if any predication can be seen to be the originating theological identity of the Eucharist, it is "the imitation of Christ," and only in its imaging Christ is the Eucharistic celebration also a sacrifice, a memorial, a thanksgiving, a blessing, or any other predication that can be legitimately given to it.

#### CHRISTIAN LIFE AS IMITATION OF CHRIST

A strong tradition exists from NT times onward for characterizing Christian life as the imitation of Christ. Nevertheless, Gospel writers never use the word "imitate" in this connection. They speak rather of the call to "follow" Christ. E. Cothenet has argued that this image of "following," of walking behind and apart from the Lord, corresponds more fittingly to the vocation of the apostles during the earthly life of Christ.<sup>9</sup> Living with him in the flesh, these first disciples were called on to witness to the uniqueness of Christ and his saving deeds in history. Whereas the word "imitation" implies similarity and therefore a possibility of equality of disciples with Jesus, "following" more aptly connotes, along with a certain closeness, the disparity those disciples experienced between themselves and their divine Master.

<sup>6</sup> W. Kasper, "Einheit und Vielfalt der Aspekte der Eucharistie," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift (Communio)* 14 (1985) 203, n. 27.

<sup>7</sup> L. Lies, "Eulogia—Überlegungen zur formalen Sinngestaltung der Eucharistie," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 100 (1978) 69.

<sup>8</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper 111; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982) "Eucharist" II:2.

<sup>9</sup> "Imitation du Christ dans l'écriture," in art. "Imitation du Christ," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique* 7:2 (1971) 1539. See also E. J. Tinsley, "Jesus 'Imitator Patris,'" *The Life of the Spirit* 9, no. 100 (1954) 165-71, and "The *imitatio Christi* in the Mysticism of St. Ignatius of Antioch," *TU* 64 (*Stud. pat.* 2:2; Berlin: Akademie, 1957) 553-60; M. Pellegrino, "L'Imitation du Christ dans les Actes des martyrs," *Vie spirituelle* 98 (1985) 38-54.

On the other hand, even the idea of "following" somehow includes in its meaning the notion of imitation. As Augustine writes, "... for what does 'following' mean, if not imitation?"<sup>10</sup> When Paul, therefore, leaves aside the language of "following" to insist that believers "become imitators" of the Lord, he does so in actual continuity with the Gospel experience.<sup>11</sup> After the resurrection of Christ and the disciples' recognition of his divinity, and after Christ's indwelling the Church through the gift of the Spirit, the implicit dangers in using imitation language were effectively removed. As Paul himself observes, "If once we knew Christ according to the flesh, that is not how we know him now" (2 Cor 5:16). According to the Apostle, then, disciples of Christ no longer live simply alongside their Lord as they did when he walked the earth. Now they live, no longer they, but Christ lives *in* them (Gal 2:20).

This Pauline doctrine of Christian life as participation in Christ is the basis for the theology of imitation. The word "imitation" could possibly be misunderstood here as a synonym for "mimicry," since the word does denote a patterning of one's outward behavior on some external model. But since Christian life is not fundamentally a human enterprise, the imitation of Christ is not reducible to reproducing the outward, physical actions of the historical Jesus. "Imitation of Christ" refers rather to the total transformation of Christians which results from Christ's indwelling, that is, to the living similarity to Christ of those who through his power have entrusted themselves to him. This effective presence of Christ in them is the reason why Paul can identify his own actions with those of Christ himself: "Become imitators of me," he says, "as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).<sup>12</sup> Although for Paul, as we know, salvation is not found in mere conformity to external laws or patterns of behavior, the actions of one who truly lives his or her life in Christ necessarily resemble the Source from whom those actions flow. Indeed, in the language of traditional theology, such actions are "sacramental": they are signs which actually effect the salvation they signify or imitate. In a word, the indwelling of Christ allows the actions of Christians to participate in the actions of Christ.

In believing that Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, Christians

<sup>10</sup> *De sancta virginitate* 27 (PL 40, 411b).

<sup>11</sup> See D. M. Stanley, S.J., "'Become Imitators of Me': The Pauline Conception of Apostolic Tradition," *Biblica* 40 (1959) 859-77, and Davidson, *Typology* 147-90. In his discussion of 1 Cor 10:11, Davidson argues that the Greek word *typikōs* is often wrongly translated: "The word-substitution 'example' [for 'type'], employed in most modern English versions, is particularly misleading. As we have already noted, *typos* denotes far more than moral example. It refers [in Pauline writings] to a shaping, moulding power.... The translation 'example' also fails to express the dual aspects of *Nachbild* and *Vorbild* which are present in this usage of *typos*" (161).

<sup>12</sup> See also 1 Thess 1:6; 2:13; 2 Thess 3:7, 9; Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 4:16; Gal 4:12.

ascribe to him all the attributes of divinity. As God, therefore, he is the actions he performs. That is to say, he is what he does, and does what he is.<sup>13</sup> In the Scriptures Jesus does not merely tell us *about* God; his words and his actions are not simply moral guides to successful living. The events of his life themselves actualize God in human history.<sup>14</sup> In order, then, to know Christ at all, Christians must *do what Christ did*; they must participate in his saving actions, be part of his saving events. In other words, they must imitate Christ. As John says, "In this we have come to know his love, that he laid down his life for us; and we likewise ought to lay down our life for the brethren" (1 Jn 3:16).<sup>15</sup>

Here again, the imitation of Christ of which John speaks does not consist in a mere outward repetition of individual acts of Jesus. It lies rather in living inwardly the central mystery of his life on earth. Accordingly, Paul exhorts his Philippians: "Have that mind in you that was in Christ Jesus" (2:5). That is to say, to be a Christian means to allow Christ to so animate one's life that every action imitates Christ's saving events. Such actions, then, will express a humility, an obedience to God's will, and a love which not only are like Christ's but actually *are* Christ in his self-giving death and resurrection. Furthermore, not only do truly Christian actions contain Christ in his saving events but, as Paul teaches, they do so because those same events somehow include in themselves the reality of all Christian living in this world: "The love of Christ impels us, considering that since one died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor 5:14).

This concept of the pre-existence of Christian living in the saving events of Christ is otherwise expressed in Scripture in terms of what has been characterized as "corporate personality."<sup>16</sup> By this term is meant (a) any major figure in salvation history who somehow includes in his or her own reality that of a whole group of people, and (b) the corresponding group in turn ratifying its inclusion by imaging, and thereby reproducing in its own actions, the actions of the major figure in question. For example, according to Paul, just as the whole human race by sharing in a humanity in common with Adam is in solidarity with his sin, so too through his death-resurrection all human beings are enabled now to participate in the reality of Christ (Rom 5). In other words, Christ is a

<sup>13</sup> H. Urs von Balthasar, *Church and World* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967) 57.

<sup>14</sup> "The world and its history has been designed from the very beginning with a view to the Word of God become flesh. . . . Thus the history of the world is . . . the history of God himself" (K. Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation History," *Theological Investigations* 5 [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966] 114).

<sup>15</sup> Jn 13:15 symbolizes Christian involvement in Christ explicitly in terms of *imitatio*: "I have given you a pattern, that just as I have done to you, so you also might do."

<sup>16</sup> See J. de Fraine, *Adam and the Family of Man* (New York: Alba, 1965), summarized in B. van Iersel, "Some Biblical Roots of the Christian Sacraments," *Concilium* 31 (New York: Paulist, 1967) 15-20.

corporate personality. But as such, he is unique among all others. This becomes explicit in the deutero-Pauline writings. By his life, death, and resurrection, Christ includes in his own reality not simply one social grouping among others but all human beings who ever lived, and all creation as well: "In him all things were made in the heavens and on earth. . . . For it has pleased God that in him all fulness should dwell, and that through him He should reconcile all things to Himself, making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:16, 19, 20).<sup>17</sup>

Herein lies the basis on which the NT interprets the OT typologically. Because in his saving events Christ is seen as the source of all creation, the NT understands him to be the prototype and fulfilment of salvation history.<sup>18</sup> God was present to Israel through human beings, such as Moses and David, but only to the degree that in their inner attitudes and outward behavior they imaged in some way the saving events of Christ's life on earth ("the blood of his cross"). They were "types" of Christ: "Truly, truly I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives [throughout history] you the true bread from heaven. . . . I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:32, 35).

In the same way, Jesus in the Gospels claims to include in himself those OT corporate personalities originally presented as vehicles for God's salvation, e.g., the "Son of Man" of Daniel 7 and the "Suffering Servant." Found in Deutero-Isaiah, the Servant is someone by whose suffering faith God is seen to redeem a whole people (chaps. 52-53). In his actions at the Last Supper, then, Jesus is presented as the Servant. He takes up a cup of wine precisely as the cup of suffering which in the OT God gives out as punishment to sinners.<sup>19</sup> In drinking from this cup, Jesus in effect unites to himself all human beings, taking on himself all aspects of human existence, even the results of human sinfulness. However, as their corporate personality, Jesus does not drink the cup alone. Although the cup is uniquely his own, his members must also in some way share in it. Thus, when he asks his disciples "Can you drink of the cup which I must drink, and be baptized with the baptism with which I will be baptized?" (Mk 10:35-40; par. Mt 20:20-23, Lk 12:5), he agrees with their response that indeed they will do so. United in him, their lives will in fact share in both the sufferings and the salvation of their Lord. As his members, the disciples of Christ actually participate in his historical events, thereby imitating him in the very "baptism" with which he himself is "baptized."

<sup>17</sup> See J.-N. Aletti, *Colossiens 1,1-30: Genre et exégèse du texte, fonction de la thématique sapientielle* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981).

<sup>18</sup> Laurance, "Priest" 1-31.

<sup>19</sup> A. Feuillet, "La coupe et le baptême de la passion," *Revue biblique* 74 (1967) 356-91.

## EUCHARIST AS IMITATION OF CHRIST

In a recent article, P. Henrici analyzed the phrase "Do this" in the Lord's Last Supper command "Do this in remembrance of me."<sup>20</sup> Henrici shows that the statement intends not only that Christians repeat Jesus' Last Supper actions ritually in their liturgies but that their daily living imitate Christ in the inner attitude which motivated the events of his passion. Accordingly, the Fourth Gospel replaces the institution narrative found in the Synoptics with the story of the foot washing where the Lord gives a similar command: "If I, then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn 13:15). Therefore, Henrici maintains, "Do this in remembrance of me" means, first, that Christians must live in loving service of one another (symbolized by the foot washing), and second, that this service is a *Nachvollzug*, an actualization of the saving events that it imitates.

What Henrici here affirms as true for the whole of Christian life, that it is an imitation which actualizes Christ in his saving events, he nevertheless goes on to deny regarding the Eucharist itself. "Taken more precisely, the Eucharist is not an imitation but rather what is to be imitated, the archetype, to which every Christian imitative-realization (*Nachvollzug*) points and from which it receives its gushing power."<sup>21</sup>

It is clear that what is celebrated in the Eucharist must be imitated throughout the rest of Christian living. However, Christ acts in the Eucharist, becoming present in the first place, only as part of the Church's overall imitation of him in this world, as Fritz Chenderlin demonstrates in his masterful work "*Do This As My Memorial*." He argues that the Eucharist is primarily a prayer to God that He remember Christ.<sup>22</sup> That is to say, it is the Church's plea that the present moment of each Eucharistic celebration be seen as part of those saving events in which God eternally bound Himself to the glorification of Jesus. Believing that Christ is the inner source of its life, the Church at the Eucharist speaks to the Father in his name, making its prayer through him. However, not content with simply saying words of remembrance, the believing community lives them out in the Church's liturgical rituals. In reminding the Father that Jesus at the Last Supper includes all humanity in his own reality and destiny ("Take, eat, this is my body"), the Church makes its own the very actions which Jesus himself performed. For example, at the precise moment that presiders at the Eucharist recount the words of Jesus, they dare to take up the bread and cup into their own

<sup>20</sup> P. Henrici, "Tut dies zu meinem Gedächtnis," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift (Communio)* 14 (1985) 226-35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 232.

<sup>22</sup> Chenderlin, "*Do This*" 228-45.

hands, seeming to act as if they personally were Jesus. Now we know that the Eucharist is not mere liturgical drama. It does not simply recall past events as past, as realities completely over and done with. Rather, reminding God of the identity of Christ in his death-resurrection with the Church performing the Eucharist, this liturgical imitation of Christ effects what it signifies. It does so because it allows the transforming memory of God to act on the Church through the Church's own exercise of faith. Put another way, Chenderlin remarks that, when Jesus gave his Last Supper command "Do this *as my memorial*," among other meanings he also must have intended to convey the sense "Do this, you (especially when you do it) *are my memorial*."<sup>23</sup> It is as the imitation of Christ that the Eucharist is the Church's memorial, and as an *effective* memorial of Christ, making him present in his saving deeds, it is also the fountain from which flows the rest of the Church's life.

In effect, then, as E. Dekkers has recently demonstrated,<sup>24</sup> the Eucharist is not a simple repetition of the Last Supper. Rather, just as Jesus at the Last Supper ritualized the inner love and obedience that motivated his whole life on earth, so too the Eucharist is intended to stylize and explicitate the Church's sometimes obscure imitation of Christ in its everyday life. Accordingly, Paul warns the Corinthians that if they do not express the Lord's generosity in their (everyday) dealings with one another, then when they meet together it is not the Lord's Supper they eat (1 Cor 11:20). Their imitation of the Last Supper in that case would be empty and meaningless. The Church's imitation of Christ, therefore, must be part of the ongoing imitation that is the whole of Christian life.

Nor, for that matter, is the imitation of Christ at the Eucharist confined to the presider's actions at the words of institution. The whole Eucharistic liturgy—preaching and listening, singing and processing, as well as praying the Eucharistic prayer—is meant to be an imitation of Christ. Like the Galatians, who, Paul claims, saw "Christ crucified before [their] eyes" in the event of his preaching to them (Gal 3:1), those who participate in the Eucharist with faith, no matter what their particular role in the liturgy, will see Christ in his saving events in the liturgical actions they perform.

Cyprian of Carthage, the great third-century proponent of the imitation of Christ in Christian life,<sup>25</sup> insists on this point: Christ becomes visible

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 225.

<sup>24</sup> "L'Eucharistie, imitation ou anamnèse de la dernière cène?" *Revue des sciences religieuses* 58 (1984) 15–23.

<sup>25</sup> Phrases indicating Cyprian's central concern in his writings for the imitation of Christ include: "Hoc est enim velle cum Christo inveniri, id quod Christus et docuit et fecit imitari" (*Ep.* 58, 1); "... sacerdotes Dei et Christi, quod Christus et docuit et fecit imitantes..." (*Ep.* 55, 19). For analyses of Cyprian's theology of the imitation of Christ, see S. Deléani,

in our liturgical imitation. "There is nothing in which a confessor may be of greater aid to his fellows than that, while the Gospel reading is heard from his lips, those who hear are able to imitate the faith of the reader."<sup>26</sup> The Christ recalled in the Scriptures becomes present at the liturgy, demanding response, to the degree that he becomes "incarnate" in the faithful participants. Christians may possess Christ as a "treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to [them]" (2 Cor 4:7); nevertheless, the manifestation of Christ in their faith is self-authenticating.<sup>27</sup> It has an authority which transcends mere human testimony, but which also can be experienced only in and through the believing Church. Therefore, although the people of Sychar in the Fourth Gospel (Jn 4) may have been led to Jesus by the stories of the Samaritan woman and only later experienced Jesus directly, participants in the liturgy do not experience the stories from Scripture as mere secondhand testimony. These participants actually see Christ for themselves in their own mutual involvement in God's word.

This awareness that God's saving events become visible in sacred ritual is, of course, not unique or even original to Cyprian. L. Monloubou demonstrates that the same was true for ancient Israel.<sup>28</sup> In the Psalms, worshippers claim to experience and even to "see" the salvation events for which they praised God, finding him in their very acts of praising him: "What we heard [i.e., about the past], we saw for ourselves in the city of Zion [i.e., in the Temple liturgy]" (Ps 48:8).

B. Studer shows this same dynamic at work in the theology of Leo the Great.<sup>29</sup> The *lectio*, or reading, of the Gospel at the liturgy becomes through the Church's faith a *visio*, a seeing.<sup>30</sup> As a result, the events

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*Christum sequi: Etude d'un thème dans l'oeuvre de saint Cyprien* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1979), and Laurance, "Priest" 223-30.

<sup>26</sup> *Ep.* 39, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Urs von Balthasar, *Church and World*: "Never in the gospel is the following, the imitation, of the Lord described as something to be achieved by degrees. The disciples . . . are given a role with which they have to identify themselves" (80). "'Typos' is actually something hammered out, stamped out, an outline to guide which withstands every kind of verification, and on which psychology, Christian or otherwise, breaks its teeth in vain. . . . What St. Paul calls form is, however, indivisible, and the only motivational force in human events, even though it is rightly perceptible only with the eyes of faith. . . . The *typos* can be, in a way, static, full, and perfect—and so really be put forward as an exemplar for imitation—while the person bearing it is still long engaged in struggle and imperfection" (82).

<sup>28</sup> L. Monloubou, "La louange et l'histoire," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 100 (1978) 697-705.

<sup>29</sup> B. Studer, "Die Einheit der Exegese Augustins auf die Predigten Leos des Grossen," in *Forma futuri: Studi in onore Michele Pellegrino* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1975) 915-30.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 918.

recalled in the life of Christ are experienced as actually happening in the event of the Church's ritual memorial: *hodie*, today. In Leo's words, "That which was visible in the life of our Redeemer has passed over into the sacred signs [of the liturgy]." <sup>31</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS

According to the theology of the imitation of Christ presented here, all of God's activity outside His own being takes place in and through Jesus Christ. All things are created and redeemed "through him, with him, and in him," <sup>32</sup> so that to the degree that anything in this world exists in fact and grows in its true existence, it manifests the being of Christ. Consciously or not, it "imitates" Christ, resembling him in his lifelong passover from this world to the Father, but especially in his passion, death, and resurrection. Furthermore, herein lies the basis throughout the centuries for the Church's unquestioning use of created, physical materials as liturgical symbols. In crying out on Good Friday, for example, "Behold the wood of the cross," or at Easter Vigil, "This is the night," the Church proclaims again its age-long belief that the created world exists only by its participation in Christ's paschal mystery and that, conversely, the purpose of Christian liturgy is to reveal and to further realize the fundamental unity of all things in Christ. That is to say, what is true for all creation is pre-eminently true for the liturgy itself, especially for the Eucharist, which most closely heeds the command "Do this in remembrance of me."

Among the various predications properly given to the Eucharist, then, only "imitation of Christ" directly names its most fundamental theological identity. Although the Eucharist is indeed a thanksgiving, a blessing, a sacrifice, etc., it is so only because the passover of Christ *imitated* at the Eucharist can also be seen as the greatest of all acts of thanksgiving, blessing, or sacrifice. Now if one simply affirms greatness within each of these categories of human activity, the conclusion is inescapable that it is also possible for other true thanksgivings, blessings, and sacrifices to exist in this world apart from Christ. However, if the Eucharist is seen as fundamentally the imitation of Christ, then the Church remains committed in principle to receive only from Christ himself the true definitions of all things, including that of thanksgiving, blessing, or sacrifice: "The spiritual person judges all things . . . for . . . [he or she has] the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:15-16).

That the unity of all creation in the passover of Christ is the ultimate grounding for all Eucharistic theology is clearly stated in the writings of

<sup>31</sup> "Quod itaque redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transivit" (*Serm.* 74, 2 [PL 54, 398a]).

<sup>32</sup> From the doxology common to the four Eucharistic prayers of Paul VI.

Cyprian of Carthage. In his Epistle 63, Cyprian is called on to set down what is absolutely required for a true and valid Eucharistic celebration. In doing so, he bases his argument on Col 1:15–20: because Christ is the “fulness” of all reality (1:19),<sup>33</sup> and the “first-born” of all creation (1:15),<sup>34</sup> then only if the Eucharist imitates the events of Christ’s “passion”<sup>35</sup> will it actually participate in their saving power. In other words, for Cyprian, sacramental imitation of Christ is effective precisely because it is actually the fullest expression of Christ already present and active in the sacramental world of God’s creation. Furthermore, because Christ is “Truth,”<sup>36</sup> only if he is evident in the Church’s liturgical imitation will he be “truly” present in the Eucharistic celebration: “. . . that priest truly functions in place of Christ who imitates that which Christ did, and consequently offers a true and complete sacrifice in the Church to God the Father. . . .”<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, that which constitutes the Eucharist as a true reality in the first place, and more specifically as a “true and complete sacrifice,” is its being an imitation of the saving events of Christ.

Out of these considerations the crucial question arises: To what degree must the Eucharist outwardly correspond to the historical events of the life of Christ in order for the Church to fulfil his command “Do this in remembrance of me”?

Although the imitation of Christ in the Eucharist is not mimicry, it does include an outward manifestation of the Church’s interior faith in Christ as the origin and the salvation of the created world. As the most concentrated expression of the Church’s faith, of all created realities it will correspond most closely to the saving events of Christ, who is the ultimate source and content of that faith.<sup>38</sup> One needs only to reflect on how, in Eucharistic celebrations through the centuries, the faithful give their highest attention and reverence to the enactment of the words of institution. That ritual most clearly imitates in its outward form the historical events of Christ’s passover because it is the deepest expression

<sup>33</sup> “. . . Dominus panem et calicem mixtum obtulit, et qui est plenitudo veritatem praefiguratae imaginis adimplevit” (*Ep.* 63, 4).

<sup>34</sup> “Si solus Christus audiendus est, non debemus adtendere quid alius ante nos faciendum putaverit, sed quid qui ante omnes est Christus prior fecerit” (*Ep.* 63, 13).

<sup>35</sup> The term *passio* for Cyprian includes in its meaning the Last Supper, Calvary, and Christ’s resurrection (Laurance, “*Priest*” 86–88).

<sup>36</sup> Cyprian constantly refers to the reality of Christ in Christian life as *veritas* (Laurance, “*Priest*” 88–90).

<sup>37</sup> “. . . ille sacerdos vice Christi vere fungitur qui id quod Christus fecit imitatur et sacrificium verum et plenum tunc offert in ecclesia Deo patri . . .” (*Ep.* 63, 14).

<sup>38</sup> For an explication of Christ as source and content of the Church’s faith, see the seminal article by E. J. Kilmartin, S.J., “Apostolic Office: Sacrament of Christ,” *TS* 36 (1975) esp. 254–60.

of the Church's faith in the saving work of Christ in its everyday life.<sup>39</sup> It is obvious that mere outward imitation of Christ's Last Supper words would not guarantee interior faith and the presence of Christ. Outward imitation implies salvation only to the degree that it truly manifests Christ in the Church as the source and content of its faith.

In determining what is always and everywhere necessary for a true celebration of the Eucharist, those arguments based exclusively on the external actions of Christ at the Last Supper are accordingly unhelpful. For example, that only wheat bread and grape wine can be used,<sup>40</sup> or that only males, because they bear a "natural resemblance" to Christ,<sup>41</sup> can be presiders. If these restrictions are in fact theologically necessary, they can be so only if the Church is otherwise unable to express its fundamental faith in the historical events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection as the unique source of its salvation.<sup>42</sup> At the present time, therefore, the only response possible to the question is a continuing docility on the part of the faithful and hierarchy alike to the leadings of Christ through his Spirit in the living faith of the Church.

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<sup>39</sup> In the same vein, Augustine remarks: "Si enim sacramenta quamdam similitudinem earum rerum quarum sacramenta sunt non haberent, omnino sacramenta non essent" (*Ep.* 98 [PL 33, 364]).

<sup>40</sup> M. Amaladoss, S.J., in his study of sacramental semeiology, suggests in effect that the Eucharist can express the reality of Christ's death and resurrection only insofar as it is seen to be a part (albeit foundational) of the Church's continual manifestation of Christ's saving events in its own daily living: "These secondary elements (bread and wine) cannot outweigh the need for the sacramental symbolic action [of the Eucharist] to be authentically the community's action, so that when the priest offers up 'the produce of the earth and the work of human hands' it is the produce of their earth and their hands" (*Do Sacraments Change?: Variable and Invariable Elements in Sacramental Rites* [Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1979] 118).

<sup>41</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1977) 12.

<sup>42</sup> K. Rahner has established that the authenticity of a church sacrament is found not so much in a verifiable historical institution in the life of Christ as in the nature of the Church itself: "A fundamental act of the church . . . which truly involves the nature of the church as the historical eschatological presence of redemptive grace, is *ipso facto* a sacrament . . . . The institution of a sacrament can (it is not necessarily implied that it must always) follow simply from the fact that Christ founded the church with its sacramental nature" (*The Church and the Sacraments* [New York: Herder & Herder, 1963] 41).