

THE NONVIOLENT EUCCHARIST

The Word that has been on stage since the curtain rose,
but left unsaid,
must be spoken.

REV. EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

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A Pastoral Approach: The Nonviolent Eucharistic Jesus

Twelve frightened men, who feel that death is hovering over, crowd around the Son of Man whose hand is lifted over a piece of bread and over a cup.

Of what value is this gesture, of what use can it be?

How futile it seems when already a mob is arming itself with clubs, when in a few hours Jesus will be delivered to the courts, ranked among transgressors, tortured, disfigured, laughed at by His enemies, pitiable to those who love Him, and shown to be powerless before all.

However, this Man, condemned to death does not offer any defense; He does nothing but bless the bread and wine and, with eyes raised, pronounces a few words.

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

The Eucharist is not only a mystery to consecrate, to receive, to contemplate and adore. It is also a mystery to imitate.

RANIERO CANTALAMESSA, O.F.M. CAP.

Outside of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist has no Christian meaning. Everything about it must ultimately be referenced to Him and then through Him to Abba. The same is true of the Christian life. Jesus is the ultimate norm of Christian existence; everything must be referenced to Him. If He is not the final standard against which the Church

and the Christian must measure everything in order to determine if it is the will of God or not, then who or what is?

The Ultimate Norm of the Christian Life

What would Christianity or the Church mean for the Christian if Jesus' Way or teachings were made subject to, or were measured for correctness by whether Plato, Hugh Hefner, or the local emperor happen to agree with them? Since for the Christian Jesus is the Word of God, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Self-revelation of God: "The one who sees me sees the Father" (JOHN 14:9), since for the Christian He is "the Way and the Truth and the Life" (JOHN 14:6), it is senseless to maintain that the Christian life can ultimately be modeled on anyone or anything except Jesus. Even the saints must be measured against Jesus and His teachings to determine what in their lives is worthy of Christian honor and what is not.

New Commandment Contains the Entire Law of the Gospel

Jesus, Himself, unequivocally commands precisely this when He says, "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (JOHN 13:34). As the one the Church calls "the greatest saint of modern times," St. Thérèse of Lisieux, says in her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*:

Among the countless graces I have received this year, perhaps the greatest has been that of being able to grasp in all its fullness the meaning of love...I had striven above all to love God, and in loving Him I discovered the secret of those other words "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father." Jesus made me understand what the will was by the words he used at the Last Supper when He gave His "new commandment" and told His apostles "to love one another as He had loved them"... When God under the old law told His people to love their neighbors

as themselves, He had not yet come down to earth. As God knows how much we love ourselves, He could not ask us to do more. But when Jesus gave His apostles a “new commandment, His own commandment,” He did not ask only that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, but that we should love them as He loves them and as He will love them to the end of time. O Jesus, I know you command nothing that is impossible... O Jesus ever since its gentle flame has consumed my heart, I have run with delight along the way of your “new commandment.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “The entire Law of the Gospel is contained in the *new commandment* of Jesus, to love one another as he has loved us” and that “This commandment summarizes all the others and expresses His [the Father’s] entire will.” Now if, as the biblical scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie, echoing the understanding of modern Biblical scholarship, says, Jesus’ rejection of violence is “the clearest of teachings” in the New Testament, then that love that is in the Spirit of Christ, that love that is imitative of Christ, that love that is Christ-like, that love that is “as I have loved,” that love which “contains the entire Law of the Gospel,” that love “which expresses His entire will” is a nonviolent love of friends and enemies.

Both Biblical scholarship and a common sense reading of the Gospel tell us that this *new commandment* of Jesus to “love one another as I have loved you,” is not a throwaway line or an arbitrary insertion of a thought into the Gospel. On the contrary, the *new commandment* is so placed in the Gospel as to be presented as the supreme and solemn summary of all of Jesus’ teachings and commands. The importance of all this for Eucharistic understanding and Eucharistic unity is this: Jesus’ solemn *new commandment* is given and proclaimed not on a mountain top nor in the Temple, but, as St. Thérèse notes, at the Last Supper, the First Eucharist.

Poised between time and eternity and about to be pressed like an olive by religiously endorsed, rationally justified and state executed homicidal violence, to which He knows He must respond with a love that is neither violent nor retaliatory, with a love that forgives and that seeks to draw good out of evil, He proclaims, “I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me and as I told the Jews, where I go you cannot come; now I say to you, I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (JOHN 13:33-34).

Liturgical and Operational Indifference

It is hard to conceive of a more dramatically powerful context to communicate the importance of a truth to people for an indefinite future. Imagine how the world would be today if this *new commandment* as taught on the first Holy Thursday and lived unto death on the first Good Friday was continuously remembered in Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Eucharistic Prayers throughout the ages. For one thing, there would be no Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant division of the Church because, whatever the intellectual reasons were that promoted each division and each division of a division, the one thing that predates all of them and postdates most of them is a thoroughgoing liturgical and operational indifference to the *new commandment* that Jesus proclaims by word at the First Eucharist and by example at the Sacrifice of Calvary.

All the major modern divisions in the Church follow by centuries the Church’s justification of violence and homicide with all the distortion of perspective and spirit that persistence in such activities brings to individuals and communities. And, after each division all of the Churches—minus a few of the ‘Peace Churches’—continue to teach, to endorse and to employ violence and homicide as part of their Christian way. This necessitated that in these Churches, or any subdivision thereof, the Eucharistic liturgy be not too explicit in remembering the

details of the Gospel-given history of the Lord's Supper, of the Lord's Passion and of the Lord's Death. Less still could any Church that justifies and participates in violence and homicide afford to be continually Eucharistically emphatic in remembering Jesus' *new commandment* given at the Last Supper, and the clear relationship between it and the Way He in fact historically responds to violence and enmity. What one does not underline is what one does not want to remember.

A Eucharistic Prayer That Embodies Nonviolent love

So until this very day, in the Eucharistic Liturgies of such Churches, a solitary word, "suffered" or "death," has normally been quite enough memory, commemoration, remembrance, or anamnesis for fulfilling the Lord's Command, "Do this in memory (anamnesis) of me." Of course, technically the words "suffered" and "death" are theologically correct, but are they pastorally sufficient for the sanctification of the Christian, the Church, and the world? What would the condition of the Church and hence the world be like today if the Eucharistic Prayers of the Churches of Christianity had read at their most sacred point, "the institution narrative-anamnesis (remembrance)," something like the following over the last 1700 years:

...On the night before He went forth to His eternally memorable and life-giving death, like a Lamb led to slaughter, rejecting violence, loving His enemies, and praying for His persecutors, He bestowed upon His disciples the gift of a New Commandment:

"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."

Then He took bread into His holy hands, and looking up to You, almighty God, He gave thanks, blessed it, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said:

*“Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body
which will be given up for you.”*

*Likewise, when the Supper was ended, He took the cup. Again He gave
You thanks and praise, gave the cup to His disciples and said:*

*“Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the
blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you
and for all so that sins may be forgiven.”*

“Do this in memory of me.”

Obedient, therefore, to this precept of salvation, we call to mind and reverence His passion where He lived to the fullest the precepts which He taught for our sanctification. We remember His suffering at the hands of a fallen humanity filled with the spirit of violence and enmity. But, we remember also that He endured this humiliation with a love free of retaliation, revenge, and retribution. We recall His execution on the cross. But, we recall also that He died loving enemies, praying for persecutors, forgiving, and being superabundantly merciful to those for whom justice would have demanded justice. Finally, we celebrate the memory of the fruits of His trustful obedience to thy will, O God: the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand, the second and glorious coming. Therefore we offer You your own, from what is your own, in all and for the sake of all...

The explicit inclusion of the memory of Jesus' *new commandment*, Jesus' rejection of violence, Jesus' love of enemies, Jesus' prayer for His persecutors, and Jesus' return of good for evil in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Churches at the point of "institution-anamnesis" is not a whimsical or arbitrary insertion of haphazard events from Jesus' life. This is what happens from the Cenacle to Calvary. This is the memory given to us to

revere by the ultimate historical, theological and pastoral documents on the subject: the four Gospels.

Maundy Thursday—A Mandate to Love as Christ Loves

The very name for Holy Thursday, Maundy Thursday, comes from the Latin “mandatum,” which means a command, commission, charge, order, injunction. It is a direct and exclusive reference to the *new commandment* given at the Lord’s Supper. The inclusion of the *new commandment* in the Eucharistic Prayer is not riding one’s own theological or liturgical hobby-horse into the Church’s public prayer life. The *new commandment* is there from Day One of the Eucharist and it is there in maximal solemnity and seriousness.

So, also, rejection of violence, love of enemies, and prayer for persecutors are an irrevocable part of the history, Scripture, and authentic memory of the Sacrifice of Love on Calvary. Refusing the protection of the sword (MT 26:52), healing the ear of the armed man who is to take Him to His death (LK 22:51) and crying out for God’s forgiveness for those who are destroying Him (LK 23:34) is the memory the Gospels give to humanity of the victimization of Christ. To side-step these authentic Apostolic memories in order to get to a more profound or holy or “deep” spirituality is sheer folly. One has to have the humility to accept revelation as God offers it. If one does not want to prayerfully enter into revelation as presented by God, then one has no access to revelation; for who but God can author revelation?

Emaciated Revelatory Remembrance Subverts Divine Love

Jesus does not die of a heart attack. He dies when His heart is attacked by human beings inebriated with the diabolical spirit of justified, religiously endorsed homicide—and He dies giving a definite, discernible, and consistent response to that satanic spirit. This reality cannot be insignificant in discerning the Truth of the revelation God is trying to communicate

to humanity for the good of humanity in Jesus. The Sacrifice of the Cross is not about mere animal pain that is meant to assuage the lust of a sadistic, blood-thirsty, parochial god. It is about the revelation of the nature and meaning and way and power of a Divine Love that saves from an Enemy and a menace that the darkest phenomena of history can only but hint at. To consistently dismiss and to structurally ignore major facts in the God-given revelatory memory is to assure that little of what God intended to be communicated by this costly revelation will be communicated by it. So, while use of an isolated word, “suffered” or “death,” in the Eucharistic Prayer is theologically passable, pastorally speaking it is emaciated revelatory anamnesis (remembrance).

However, it does not take much reflection to perceive how these detail-devoid Eucharistic Prayers—that do not mention Jesus’ *new commandment* given at the Last Supper, that do not mention His rejection of violence, that do not mention His love of even lethal enemies, that do not mention His prayer for persecutors, and His struggle to overcome evil with good—serve a critical function in amalgamating Christianity into the local national or ethnic violence-ennobling myths, as a religious legitimizer. Intentional forgetfulness, structured inattentiveness, and a cavalier disparaging of Jesus’ teachings of nonviolent love have always been part of this process of religious validation by evasion. Without this cultivated liturgical blind spot Jesus could not be drafted as a Divine support person for the home team’s homicide and enmity.

Amnesia About Truths in Suffering and Death of Christ

It is possible today, as it has been possible for 1700 years, for a normal person to spend a lifetime listening to the Eucharistic Prayers of all of the mainline Christian Churches and never apprehend that what is being remembered is a Person—who at the moments being remembered in the Prayers—rejects violence, forgives everyone, prays for persecutors, returns good for evil. In other words, in most Christian Churches,

the anamnesis has become an agency for amnesia about truths in the suffering and death of Christ that if consistently brought to consciousness at the sacred time of the community's Eucharist would stand in judgement on a multitude of community activities, past and present.

The Rev. Frederick R. McManus, Emeritus Professor at The Catholic University of America and one of the two or three most influential Catholic liturgists of the 20th Century, writing on this issue says:

The Nonviolent Eucharist is a valuable and viable proposal to augment eucharistic anaphoras with some direct reference to the ministry and teaching of Jesus concerning peace and love, with concrete mention of the nonviolence of the Gospel message. The tradition of variety in the Eucharistic prayer, longstanding in the East and happily introduced into the Roman liturgy in the light of Vatican II's mandate to reform the Order of Mass, is ample reason to study this proposal. The centrality of the mission of peace and nonviolence in the Gospels needs to be acknowledged in the confession of the great deeds of God in the Lord Jesus, and the Christian people need to see this essential dimension of Eucharistic peace in the prayer which they confirm and ratify with their Amen.

The most renowned moral theologian of the Catholic Church in the 20th Century, Rev. Bernard Häring, states emphatically that, "It is not possible to speak of Christ's sacrifice while ignoring the role of nonviolence." Yet, this is precisely what most Christian Churches have been doing in their Eucharistic Prayers since Constantine first employed the cross as an ensign to lead people into the enmity and homicide called war.

FACT: Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants all believe they have authentic Eucharistic communion within their own Churches and often the same belief holds for communion between different Churches. This, however, has not

prevented them from sojourning into slaying their own and other Christians on a grand scale and then exonerating themselves by some fantastic contortion of the Gospel.

The Key to Eucharistic Unity and Christian Unity

Now what I am about to suggest I am sure could sound more than far-fetched, but I believe it is the pivotal decision for Christic Truth on which a future of Christian unity and Eucharistic unity wait. At this time in history, the key to Eucharistic unity and Christian unity is for Churches—each by whatever process of authority is internal to it—to compose new Eucharistic Prayers which vividly call to mind the *new commandment*, and the actual details of the historic confrontation between homicidal violence and Jesus’ nonviolent love of friends and enemies that took place at the moment being remembered.

This is not one among many things the Churches can do for peace and unity—it is what they must do. The present meagerness of Scriptural and historical memory, while it does not render the Eucharistic Prayers invalid, does make them pastorally deceptive by omission. Harnessed by nationalisms around the world, Christians do not hear the broad terms “suffered” and “death” as they were engaged in 33 A.D. Pastoral responsibility before God and pastoral integrity before the community insist that the fitting and right textual adjustments be instituted because there is a radical spiritual danger that the *paucis verbis* of the present remembrance in the Eucharistic Prayers of all the mainline Churches is unwittingly serving those forces which the Eucharistic Jesus comes to conquer.

It is Archimedes who states that there is a point outside the world that if he could locate it, he could move the world from it. The “institution narrative-anamnesis” of the Eucharistic Prayer of the Churches is that spiritual Archimedean point—if the truth of Christ’s Sacrifice is allowed

the fullness of its historical revelatory reality there. It is not magic I speak of here. It is the hidden power of the cross that is released when those who are in Christ respond to the offer of grace through Christ—an offer made through a unique and unequaled “salvation device” when He said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

For the leadership of each Church to authorize text clarifications in its Eucharistic Prayer would not be magic. For said leadership to explain the changes to the community would not be magic. For each community to consciously stand or kneel daily, weekly, or monthly in the presence of such a Nonviolent Eucharistic Lord would not be magic. All would necessitate human choice, but choice aimed at cooperating more faithfully with the incalculably powerful and mysterious reality of the Divine Design for salvation in Jesus—choice on behalf of a more authentic expression, experience and encounter with the Saving Presence of Divine Love as revealed through, with and in the Nonviolent Eucharistic Christ.

New Time of Christian Agapé

A more truthful Eucharistic Prayer is the starting point of “the fair beginning of a nobler time.” For certain this is the point from which to move the world into a New Time of Christic Agapé because, from this point on, the Christian and the Church will derive their Life from the Bread of Life of an Agapé Meal that is reverently respectful of the “last wish” of Jesus—that the love (agapé) which He showed His disciples be remembered and lived in the community as the unbreachable standard of all Christian interaction. This is the spiritual Archimedian point because there is infinitely more Power in that Mysterious Meal in the Upper Room than meets the eye—if the choice is but made to embrace it.

What is equally true is this: there is infinitely more to the *new commandment* than meets the mind. As each Church Eucharistically remembers

more lucidly the truth of Jesus' life of Nonviolent Love, His death in Nonviolent Love, and His resurrection through Nonviolent Love, Jesus' *new commandment* will disclose its depth of meaning, purpose, and power to the Churches of Christianity in a manner that will gift them with an experience of new reality. Out of this new reality will come new insight and new spirit—and from this new reality and new insight and new spirit will come new words, new phraseology, new language, new thoughts that will resolve aged and serious problems of truth. Rising from this new level of Eucharistic fidelity will come a new convergence of Christic Love and Truth that will engender an existential unity beyond present imagination. It is not magic I speak of here. Prayer changes people, and people change things, but the “Yes” for a more pastorally accurate remembrance narrative in the Eucharistic Prayer must first be given by pastors. As at Nazareth of old, God, who desires to renew the face of the earth, holds His breath and awaits His chosen servant's *fiat*.

Betrayal of Baptismal and Eucharistic Unity

In a 1969 article for the *Notre Dame Alumnus*, I wrote: “To paraphrase a student slogan, ‘Suppose someone gave a war and the Christians refused to kill or harm one another’ ...It would be a giant step forward for humanity if the Church would preach as a minimum standard of morality, the absolute immorality of one follower of Christ killing another follower of Christ.”

In 1969 I lost on all fronts with this. For the conservatives it was “just ridiculous”; for the liberals, it was too absolutist; and for the radicals, it was Christianist and anti-humanist. But, I know more surely today than I did thirty-five years ago that this is the truth of the matter. Homicide-justifying Christianity cannot dialogue itself out of the snare into which it has fallen. It must first unreservedly desire to be obedient to Jesus' *new commandment*; then from this wholehearted desire will issue the grace, insight and power to do the other tasks committed to

the Christian and the Church. Now, this desire to be faithful to the *new commandment* would at least seem to mean that as a dimension of Baptism and Eucharist, the Christian would always say “No!” if called upon to kill other Christians. He or she would do this in order not to be reduced to a ‘Judas-Christian’—a betrayer of one’s gift of Baptismal unity in Christ and a betrayer of one’s task of Eucharistic unity in His *new commandment*.

How could this not be what Jesus intended for His disciples by His *new commandment* at the Last Supper? How could this not be what Jesus intended His followers to teach, nurture, encourage, foster, energize, and command when bringing people into Baptismal and Eucharistic unity with Him and through Him with each other and God? The Church will be the servant it is meant to be to God and to humanity only to the extent that it is faithful to what it has been commanded to do internally, namely to “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” Absent an unswerving commitment to Jesus’ *new commandment*, the Church will become a body tearing itself limb from limb—and anti-sacrament of disunity, the public incarnational denial of its own truth.

Disunity Emanates from Separation of Divine Mandates

A commandment that is consigned century after century to the doorsteps of oblivion is a non-thought in a community. Obedience to a non-thought is a patent impossibility. Yet, it is at the very same Supper that the Lord commands for all time “Do this in memory of me” that He pronounces for all time His *new commandment*. How can these Divine Mandates be honestly separated? How can one be obeyed religiously while the other is religiously ignored?

It is this separation between the two great Eucharistic Commands that is the source of and the sustaining power for separation within

Christianity—ecclesiastically and Eucharistically. It is this separation in Christianity between the two great Eucharistic Commands, whose mutually complementary purpose is to unite, that has reduced the Church in confrontation with the horrid reality of evil to a coping dinosaur rather than a conquering Spirit. Disunity disempowers to the detriment of all—except the Fiend.

For mercy's sake, the pastors of Christianity must relinquish their stance of calculated inattentiveness to the unbreakable unity of Word and Sacrament. They must simply stop managing the Eucharistic Prayer in a manner that spiritually short-circuits the process of repentance—and hence unification—by perpetually camouflaging the unwanted truth of Jesus' nonviolent love of friends and enemies and His command to follow His example of love. There are not two Jesus Christs: the Eucharistic Christ of faith on one hand, and the historical Jesus on the other. John Paul II states in his Encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), "One cannot separate Jesus from the Christ or speak of a 'Jesus of history' who would differ from the 'Christ of faith'...Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth." The only Jesus Christ present at the Eucharist, the only Jesus Christ to remember and receive in the Eucharist is the Jesus Christ who taught and lived unto death a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies and who commanded His disciples to "Love one another as I have loved you"—and to "Do this in memory of me."

A Pastorally Truth-Filled Eucharist

Having recently concluded a Century in which more people have been killed by rationally-justified, religiously-legitimized war, revolution, abortion, and capital punishment than all the centuries of humanity combined; having recently concluded a Century that has by the billions mercilessly murdered "the least" (MT 25:14-46) by squandering on the technology of violence and homicide the most lavish gifts of

intelligence and learning ever granted a century of humanity; having recently concluded a Century that has brought a planet of humanity to the lip of a cauldron bubbling with the brew of nuclear plagues and war-generated diseases; having recently concluded a Century where Christianity has been a major player in all these evils—it is a moral imperative for Christian pastors to begin to lead their Churches away from evasive Eucharistic Prayers and into remembering the Way God committed to them for salvific and revelatory remembrance on Holy Thursday-Good Friday, 33 A.D.

A pastorally truth-filled Eucharistic institution narrative, as enunciated above, initiated in the beginning by the authority of each of the Churches for its own community, is the key not only to the resolution of Church divisions and Eucharistic disunity, but also the key to that New Pentecost which is the only Power that can transfigure the relentless agony humanity has made of history. From a New Holy Thursday shall shine a New Pentecost because Eucharistic prayer is the most powerful prayer to which humanity will ever have access. This means that, entered into with an honest, humble and contrite heart, Eucharistic prayer in all its forms—adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication—is the supreme instrumentality available to the human being and to the human community for their sanctification—which can only express itself in time and space as deeds of Christ-like love of God, friends, and enemies.

To love the Eucharist is to live the Eucharist. A Nonviolent Eucharistic Prayer is a mandatum of Truth, a mandatum of Peace, a mandatum of Love.

A Scholarly Approach: Do This in Remembrance of Me

*Is faith a narcotic dream in a world of heavily armed robbers,
or is it an awakening?*

THOMAS MERTON, O.C.S.O.

*We know how the Eucharist makes the Church: the Eucharist makes
the Church by making the Church Eucharist! The Eucharist is not only
the source and cause of the Church's holiness, it is also its model.*

RANIERO CANTALAMESSA, O.F.M.CAP.

The nonviolent love of Jesus for both friends and enemies is historically at the heart of His passion and death, it must therefore be communicated as being ineradicably at the heart of the Eucharist. It is the nonviolent Lamb of God, who is worshipped and consumed in the Eucharist. It is the nonviolent Lamb of God, whom the Eucharist empowers us, individually and as a Church, to imitate, to become and to proclaim. The passion narrative is about the Lamb, who goes to His death rejecting violence, loving enemies, returning good for evil, praying for His persecutors—yet conquers and reigns eternal. It is not about a snake or a rat or a tiger who goes to his death with bloody fangs or claws bared. It is also not about dying of natural causes. As Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R., the most prominent Catholic moral theologian in the second half of the Twentieth Century, writes, “It is not possible to speak of Christ’s sacrifice while ignoring the role of non-violence...Nonviolence belongs to the mystery of the Redeemer and

redemption.” The sacrifice of Christ is not about salvation through mere physiological pain. It is about salvation through the nonviolent suffering love of Jesus toward all and for all, even lethal enemies. It is about revealing the true nature of Divine love, the true and authentic Face of God. As the United States’ Catholic Bishops teach in their Pastoral, *The Challenge of Peace* (1983):

In all of his suffering, as in all of his life and ministry, Jesus refused to defend himself with force or with violence. He endured violence and cruelty so that God’s love might be fully manifest and the world might be reconciled to the One from whom it had become estranged.

Atonement and redemption, sanctification and salvation are the fruits of nonviolent, unconditional love made visible at a terrible cost to Jesus from Gethsemane to Golgotha. Therefore, what is made visible in the Gospels at the spiritual and revelatory apex of the life of Jesus should be made luminously visible in the re-presentation of the passion and death of Jesus in the Eucharistic Prayer.

Encounter with God

The Eucharist is the principal means that the Church offers to the world for meeting the true God and the truth of God through Jesus Christ, as well as for overcoming evil and death in all their manifestations. The Eucharist is God’s gift of Himself through Jesus and His Church to humanity for its liberation from enslavement to any and all of the powers of darkness and for its entering into an eternal union with the Giver and Sustainer of Life.

Ultimately the grace that is given in the Eucharist is God, Jesus. To use Schillebeeckx’s phraseology, “Jesus is the sacrament of the human encounter with God.” Jesus is this because He is God incarnate. The Eucharist is not a “salvation gimmick.” It is relating to an existing

person, Jesus Christ. This person, however, not only has a divine reality but also has a human identity. He has a history of thoughts, words and deeds. He has a history of acting and being acted upon. He has a history of joys and sorrows, choices and responses, all of which make Him and identify Him as the unique totally human—totally divine person that He is.

Principal Witness and Mundane Specifics

The Second Vatican Council (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, 18) declares the Gospels to be, “the principal witness of the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our Savior.” It further states that the Gospels “have a special pre-eminence among all the Scriptures, even those of the New Testament,” and that they “faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among people, really did and taught for their eternal salvation.” Now, the Gospels leave not a scintilla of doubt that certain facts, which some would dismiss as merely the “mundane specifics” of Jesus’ life, are vital communications for knowing the Way and the work, the person and the being of Jesus and of God. Remove these so-called “mundane specifics” from His life and there is no Jesus to be known; there is no Jesus who can serve as the sacrament of the human encounter with God. The bracketing out of segments, especially major themes, of Jesus’ life results spiritually in diluting, or in some cases falsifying, the knowledge of God which is supposed to be revealed through, with and in Him. Diluted encounters with God obviously do not bear the same fruits, for the human being or for the human community, as do unmodified, unedited, unexpurgated, unsparingly truthful encounters with God through the Jesus of the New Testament. Hence, a Eucharistic Canon anemic in its remembrance of the “mundane specifics” of the historical Jesus’ passion and death, of the Way He suffers and dies, must result at best in a very watered down relationship with the true God and with the truth of God. If too many of the “mundane specifics” of Jesus’ passion and death are left out of the

Eucharistic Prayer, it is possible that those present at the Eucharist may hardly recognize Him “in the breaking of the bread” (LK 24:35; AC 2:42) or worse, may not recognize Him or His pertinence to their lifeworld at all.

A Eucharistic Canon that pushes aside the “mundane specifics” of Jesus’ passion and death, *ipso facto* eviscerates the power of the Eucharist by not making available to the faithful significant dimensions of the gift of Divine Love which is made visible in Jesus’ journey from the Upper Room to Golgotha. Bernard Lonergan, S.J., who has been called the Apostle of the Specific, again and again throughout his writings makes the following point: “[T]o know the concrete in its concreteness is to know all there is to be known about each thing. To know all there is to be known about each thing is, precisely, to know being.” This may sound a bit esoteric but what Lonergan is communicating is that human beings encounter the real via the concrete and the specific of existence. It is therefore spiritually and theologically impermissible to bypass or downplay, as being of little or no significance, the nonviolent love of friends and enemies that permeates the entire drama of Jesus’ preaching, passion and death for the salvation of the world. As the renowned biblical scholar and the first Catholic ever to be elected president of The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, the Rev. John L. McKenzie, states with maximal scholarly authority:

If Jesus did not reject any type of violence for any purpose, then we know nothing of him.

No Toleration of Ambiguity

It is sheer spiritual folly to believe that one can minimize the historical humanity of Jesus and thereby arrive at a deeper experience of the Christ of faith or the Second Person of the Holy Trinity or God. Nothing in the Eucharistic Celebration must allow in the least for

such a spiritually destructive misinterpretation of Christian faith and prayer. As Lonergan notes, “[V]ague verbal claims that help us ignore the specifics of the particulars in which we are enmeshed” serve to assist people in their flight from understanding and from commitment. “The Eucharist,” proclaims John Paul II in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, “is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation.” But, is not the Eucharist pastorally depreciated and rendered precariously ambiguous when the nonviolent love of friends and enemies, that Jesus steadfastly adheres to throughout his passion and death, is treated as so minor as to merit only disregard?

It is left to the Church to orchestrate the re-presentation of the salvific gift of Christ-God in the Eucharist to the world. It is the Church that is responsible for making the Eucharist pastorally available in the fullness of its truth and power so that humanity can reap all the benefits of this wholly holy sacrifice of love. This pastoral process of re-presenting Christ’s saving passion and death to humanity involves human judgment, evaluation, creativity, learning and discernment in order to insure that there is no discrepancy between Word and Sacrament. No contradiction can objectively exist between the Jesus of the New Testament, who teaches and lives unto death on the cross a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies, and the Jesus encountered in the Eucharist. Christians have a Baptismal birthright to worship in the presence of this consistency of Word and Sacrament and to be straightforwardly apprised of it by their pastors. Word and Sacrament must be conspicuously one in the Church because Word and Sacrament are one in reality, in God. So whether a disciple looks upon Jesus in the Gospels or looks upon Jesus in the Eucharist, he or she must see, indeed has an unqualified right to vividly see, the same Jesus. That Jesus is a Jesus, who in obedience to the will of the Father, teaches by word and deed a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies—even when in direct confrontation with lethal enmity and violence.

It requires the exercise of pastoral acumen by the Shepherds of Jesus' flock to ensure that the gift of the Holy Eucharist is seen, is accepted and is used for the purposes for which it is created. We all know how fear or ignorance or arrogance can be the cause of the most precious gift being rejected. We likewise are aware that the most benign and salubrious gift can be misused to the point of becoming an agent of destruction, e.g., the gift of a car that is then operated by a driver under the influence of drugs. All this then immediately poses two questions. First, in the context of a human community ravaged by an unprecedented and ever-escalating firestorm of violence and enmity, what pastoral dynamic does the Eucharist intrinsically possess to confront and to conquer this satanic eruption, fueled by the reckless squandering of human life and resources on the technology of destruction? Second, what is the proper, most effective way of offering this gift, this grace, to the world so that it will be a divinely efficacious means for subduing and binding the diabolical spirits of violence and enmity across cultures and nations, time and space?

Virulent Plague

It is not being an alarmist or a self-righteous prophet of doom to recognize and to call to the attention of others that science, technology and money today are, above all else, at the service of the evils of violence and enmity. Science and technology represent power over nature. Power over nature can be an avenue to power over people, since the human being is body, as well as, soul and spirit. Science and technology can heal or hurt. The arms industry, which is premeditatedly organized to deliver pain and destruction efficiently for a profit, is by far the single largest and most profitable business on the planet at this time and it is completely at the service of enmity and violence. Trillions of dollars a year are spent on creating, manufacturing and distributing the raw instrumentality by which human lives are made subject to unspeakable levels of pain and unfathomable levels of destruction, whether

or not the weapons are ever actually employed. Hundreds of billions of dollars more are invested annually in devising and implementing ever new schemes and methodologies for nurturing, promoting and sustaining the spirits, the mindstyles, the ideologies and the value systems that make these weapons and the tidal waves of misery to which they continuously doom the “*anawim*,” appear not only desirable but necessary, not only praiseworthy but of God! Yet, as Pope Paul VI says in 1976 in his statement on disarmament to the United Nations: “The armaments race is to be condemned unreservedly...It is in itself an act of aggression which amounts to a crime, for even when they are not used, by their cost alone, armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve.” In such a world as this—where the evils of violence and enmity are so normalized—the Second Vatican Council’s (*Gaudium et Spes*, 81) solemn warning is many times more dire and urgent today than when issued: “[T]he arms race is a virulent plague” (*gravissimam plagam*).

Power Made Visible

So, is it possible that in a little piece of Consecrated Bread and in a little cup of Sanctified Wine there exists a power, indeed the only power, that is able to extricate Christians and all humanity from the ever tightening iron grip of that spirit that induces Cain’s enmity toward and destruction of his brother? Faith answers this question with an emphatic, “Yes!” Even in the face of all evidence to the contrary—including the stranglehold that the arms industry has on governments, economies and media worldwide—faith in Christ firmly proclaims that in the Eucharist abides the power (MT 28:18) to prevail over the most deeply-rooted, most extensively-organized and most highly-financed manifestations of evil.

The Eucharist has an innate and indelible, temporal and eternal solidarity with the nonviolent Jesus—the victim of violence and enmity in His passion and death and the victor over violence and enmity in His

resurrection. Indeed the Eucharist, among other things, would seem to be purposely created by Intelligent Design to free humanity from the wickedness and snares of that spirit that was behind the destruction of Abel and Jesus and is behind every expression of enmity and homicidal violence in history—from Cain to this very hour. But, this inherent dimension of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be made visible by the pastoral decision of those who are chosen by Jesus Christ to be overseers of His Church’s sacramental life and to be pastors of His people’s moral life.

Universal Public Education

Remember, 200,000 years ago the human brain possessed, because of God’s graceful design, everything necessary in order to read. However, it was not until a mere 200 years ago, when humanity began to organize itself in a way that made universal public education available, that universal literacy began to take hold country after country. By the gift and grace of God the capacity to be literate objectively existed for hundreds of millennia, but until human beings chose to do what was necessary in order to access it, it remained in the realm of almost pure potentiality. Prior to universal public education releasing this God-given endowment, only a miniscule number of human beings were able to become what they had the capability of becoming, i.e., literate.

So also is the case in the Church today and by extension in humanity today in relationship to the objectively present but latent power of the Eucharist to conquer violence and enmity and to release humanity from the diabolical trap of the normalized reciprocal destruction of human beings by human beings. A Eucharistic Prayer in the model suggested below would be the human decision for the spiritual equivalent of “universal public education” in the Way of Jesus. It would be a manifestation of a Gospel-grounded liturgical catechesis that would expand forever not only the Christian’s but also all humanity’s

consciousness of the true nature of the true God and hence of the truth of God's Way—the only Way of vanquishing violence and enmity. In the context of what has just been said and to underline what has been previously stated, a historically, theologically, liturgically and pastorally accurate addition to the institution narrative-anamnesis of the Eucharistic Canons could read as follows:

...On the night before He went forth to His eternally memorable and life-giving death, like a Lamb led to the slaughter, rejecting violence, loving His enemies, praying for His persecutors, He bestowed upon His disciples the gift of a New Commandment:

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”

Then He took bread into His holy hands, and looking up to You, almighty God, He gave thanks, blessed it, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said:

“Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.”

Likewise, when the Supper was ended, He took the cup. Again He gave You thanks and praise, gave the cup to His disciples and said:

“Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.”

“Do this in memory of me.”

Obedient, therefore, to this precept of salvation, we call to mind and reverence His passion where He lived to the fullest the precepts which He

taught for our sanctification. We remember His suffering at the hands of a fallen humanity filled with the spirit of violence and enmity. But, we remember also that He endured this humiliation with a love free of retaliation, revenge and retribution. We recall His execution on the cross. But, we recall also that He died loving enemies, praying for persecutors, forgiving, and being superabundantly merciful to those for whom justice would have demanded justice. Finally, we celebrate the memory of the fruits of His trustful obedience to thy will, O God: the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand, the second and glorious coming. Therefore we offer You your own, from what is your own, in all and for the sake of all..

This simple, short, incisive addition to the Eucharistic Prayer would release power that would dwarf in history the power released by the splitting of the atom. The Jesus of history, the Christ of faith, the Jesus of Gethsemane, the Christ of Calvary, the Jesus of the Gospels—the only Jesus Christ there is, was or ever will be—explicitly confronts the diabolical spirits of enmity and homicidal violence in all their fury at the very hour of His passion and death. By His words and deeds during this New Passover event He teaches humanity how to conquer these evils, while at the same time revealing once and for all the true face of God—a Father “who is rich in mercy,” who “lets His rain fall on the wicked and the righteous,” who “lets His sun rise on the good and the evil,” who forgives limitlessly and in whom “violence and cruelty can have no part” (*Roman Missal, The Sacramentary, Mass for Peace and Justice*).

The Eucharist is the mind-changing, converting, healing, empowering, life-saving Divine gift given to a humanity being shredded by evil presenting itself as inevitable and inescapable violence and enmity. However, the Eucharist can only be this transforming Presence if it is made fully visible and available to Christians and through Christians

to the world. Made available, that is, in a ritual atmosphere that permeates the senses and the consciousness, the will and the heart, the soul and the conscience of Christian after Christian, person after person, generation after generation with the specific Gospel details of the nonviolent love and the Nonviolent Lover who saves.

Re-membrance, Reductionism and the Acting Person

Is it not the liturgical absence of the nonviolent Way in which Jesus lives the Paschal Triduum that is the “missing piece” pastorally in contemporary Eucharistic anaphoras? Is there not a pastoral oversight of Gospel and Eucharistic truth here, to which the Overseers of the Divine Liturgy should respond? Is not the willingness to overlook self-evident elements of truth in a situation in which we are absorbed perilous at any level of existence? Bernard Lonergan has shown in his work, *Insight*, that when human activity settles down into routines of partial, vague or ambiguous truths, unconcerned with concrete specifics, then “initiative becomes the privilege of violence.” Habituation to a patterned blind spot results in the tragic—and not just for the person or persons missing the indisputably present reality. John Paul II states in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: “The Eucharist is indelibly marked by the event of the Lord’s passion and death, of which it is not only a reminder but the sacramental re-presentation.” What is indelible can never be erased, but it can be concealed, rendered invisible or ignored, thereby assuring that it will never be stored in the heart.

The act of remembering requires that an event has already taken place in history before the moment of remembrance. Prior to a person reasonably interpreting an event, or deriving meaning from it, or determining why it took place, the person must re-member—put back together—what took place. The definitive documents that tell humanity what took place from the Cenacle to Calvary are unquestionably the Gospels. To re-member the Last Supper, which “is indelibly marked by

His passion and death,” is to re-member the accounts of these events as recorded in the Gospel. For, as Vatican II (*Dei Verbum*, 18) affirms, it is these accounts that are of “apostolic origin,” are “the foundation of faith” and are “what the apostles preach in fulfillment of the mission of Christ.” To re-member the “Me,” who is to be remembered, only as one who “suffers and dies” but not to re-member the Way the “Me” suffers and dies—rejecting violence, loving enemies, forgiving superabundantly, returning good for evil, praying for persecutors—is not to re-member. It is to dis-member by the omission of overwhelmingly critical facts, or at best it is to barely re-member. It is reductionism. It is the narrowing of the re-membrance of what took place, which in turn narrows the interpretation of why it took place and how people are to respond to it. Pastorally, it should be transparent that a remembrance narrative, drained of nearly all historical particulars, cannot yield the bounteous spiritual fruits that a remembrance more generous in Passion-specificity could.

The New Testament itself is specific about the content of the Eucharistic memorial: “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death” (1 CO 11:26). The content is Christ’s death. Does death, however, mean only the moment when permanent cardiac arrest occurs, when brain waves cease, when pulmonary function totally collapses? Of course not! Death here means all that brings about that moment, all that is part of “mortifying” Him: the humiliations, the beatings, the berating, the hate manifest toward Him, the lies concocted to destroy Him, the manhandling, the betrayal by friends. And, death here also means the Way He responds to all these “mortifications”—with nonviolent suffering love toward unfaithful friends and ruthless enemies. The Altar of Calvary is an Altar of Agapé, not merely an altar of raw mammalian pain. Identification with Jesus’ suffering is identification with Jesus’ loving as God loves, and as God desires His sons and daughters to love (JN 13:34). The kind of love with which Jesus

loves throughout His passion and death is not incidental to a truth full re-membrance, to the proper fulfillment of His Eucharistic precept: *Do this in remembrance of me.*

Eucharistic reductionism pastorally weakens the revelation to, as well as, the call to the Eucharistic assembly from God through Jesus “to become what you behold, worship and consume.” This liturgical reductionism in the Eucharistic Prayer leads to a telling experiential rupture between Gospel content and anamnesis content. It is as if these two exist side by side divested of any demonstrable connections except for the most attenuated of cognitive bridges: words like “suffers,” or “passion,” or “dies for us.” The whole Way that Jesus suffers and dies in His passion is made all but invisible in one Eucharistic Prayer after another. This is in contra-distinction to the Gospels, which give a detailed and absolutely consistent presentation of the Way that Jesus confronts evil, enmity and homicidal violence. Why reductionist liturgists would consider the Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies that Jesus chose as His Way during His passion to be unworthy of illumination in the Eucharistic Prayer is difficult to fathom. Indeed, why reductionist liturgists would not consider this as a pastorally crucial dimension of all Eucharistic Prayers is puzzling. Certainly, they must be aware that ambiguity in language is resolved in the definitiveness of the human act. It is the acting Person, that the institution narrative-anamnesis is primarily supposed to assist the Christian and the Christian Community in encountering. It is the acting Jesus in the “mundane specifics” of His passion and death who gives flesh and blood, body and soul—and divinity—to such open-ended words as “suffers,” “dies” and “passion.”

Harmfulness of Reductionism

What is not difficult to comprehend and to prove is the harmfulness of this pared-down reductionist approach to the institution narrative-anamnesis. The harmfulness consists in the danger of secularization.

Reductionist remembrance narratives have shown themselves capable of allowing countless Christians to participate in the Eucharist and thereafter pledge allegiance to *der Führer* of the hour—without any spiritual uneasiness or qualms of conscience. This is a fact of scandalous proportions, which moved Bernard Häring to write: “At this juncture in history, to neglect the message and practice of [Christ’s] nonviolence could easily make the Church and Her teaching seem irrelevant.” This is a fact of prior Church life that must be viewed anew in the shadow of the on-going “virulent plague” condemned by Paul VI, which is expressing itself in unprecedented carnage. It is a fact that pastorally cries out for an end to reductionist Eucharistic Prayers, and spontaneously calls forth a more fulsome and precise institution narrative-anamnesis.

Do not Christians, leadership and laity, liturgists and theologians, have to be extremely careful not to do with the Eucharistic Jesus what the Hebrews and Romans did with the historical Jesus—remove Him and His Way from their midst in order to avoid the truth of God, which His full presence would mightily proclaim and beckon others to follow? A nonviolent historical and Eucharistic Jesus who is kept out of sight is a nonviolent Jesus who is kept out of mind. But what is the cost to the Church and to humanity, yesterday, today and tomorrow, for liturgically enshrining the absence of such critical Paschal memory?

Evasion and Reductionism

Might this not be an ecclesial spiritual problem of the highest order? Human beings, even the most saintly, must constantly struggle against the temptation to evade unwanted truth. Is there not more than ample evidence available to permit with moral certainty the rational deduction that a Christian Community, whose historical record is entangled in nationalistic and ethnic enmity and violence, could very, very easily

not want to honestly and to continually face the theological, spiritual, ethical and cognitive dissonance between its past and/or present and the nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and the Eucharist?

In other words, does not a continuous *de minimis* Eucharistic Prayer, institution narrative-anamnesis, serve the purpose of promoting an equally continuous *de minimis* call to repentance (metanoia)? Does not this reductionist approach to Eucharistic Prayers interfere with Christians “more copiously receiving His grace” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 33) at the Eucharistic celebration? Note the issue here is not that the Church *qua* Church has failed in Her mission. Indeed in Her Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) She could not have been more forthright and open, when She declares that, “The Council desires that where necessary the rites be carefully and thoroughly revised in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4). She is equally transparent in Article 33 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that the sacred liturgy is supposed to “contain abundant instruction for the faithful.”

John Paul II accurately portrays the God-given, intrinsic structure of human consciousness when he states that “All human beings desire to know...[no one is] genuinely indifferent to the question of whether what they know is true or not.” Granting then that the desire to know truth is indelibly impressed in the human person by God, does it not now have to be assiduously communicated by those responsible for the health of souls in the Church, that it is theologically, spiritually, pastorally and liturgically indisputable that a Jesus, who would be engaging in defensive or retaliatory homicidal violence, hating enemies, taking an eye for an eye and cursing persecutors, would be a Jesus engaging in his passion and death in a way that is radically different from the Way of the Jesus of the Gospels? Does it also not now have to be said

that the knowledge of God that such a Jesus would communicate about the kind of God God is and what God expects of people would be radically different from what is received in the Gospels and what should be received through every Eucharistic Prayer? Certainly this matter is now exposed as serious enough, as axial enough, as pastorally urgent enough in its implications to warrant immediate attention. The generalized terms “suffers,” “dies,” “passion” have a distinct and definite meaning in relationship to Jesus. Their reduction via emaciated remembrance to vagueness or nebulosity, contrary to Gospel specificity, does not seem to be fitting or right any longer. Indeed, if one takes seriously the phenomenon of concupiscence in human life, then it is almost self-evident that anything less than well-defined, straight-forward, unmistakable Gospel-fixed language in the institution narrative-anamnesis invites false understandings. Abstruseness, ambivalence or equivocalness at the apogee of Christian worship is dangerous. For, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has said, “[C]ontradictory things cannot be means to salvation. The truth and the lie cannot be ways of salvation in the same sense.”

Is there not unseen, yet immense tragedy, operating in the “forgetfulness” of Eucharistic Prayers on this critically and historically incontrovertible dimension of Jesus’ passion and death? If the Divine Liturgy is meant to instruct, as it is, then how is it possible to know the Way of the Father in order to “keep the ways of Yahweh” (PR 119; WS 6:18; IS 26:8; JN 13:34; 15:10), if in the crowning revelatory moment of the Father’s Way in the passion and death of Jesus, the Father’s Way is all but hidden behind the veil of a minimalist institution narrative-anamnesis? The issue here is not Eucharistic validity. But, as the Second Vatican Council states: “[W]hen the Liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing validity” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11). The issue here is allowing the Eucharist to be the fountain of grace and the empowering source of those copious

fruits that a humanity, chronically living in a wasteland of enmity and violence, absolutely requires. For ordinary people to be able to see and to encounter with ease the Eucharistic sacrifice of Jesus on Golgotha as a sacrifice on the Altar of Nonviolent Unconditional Love for All—friends and enemies—would seem to be vital. It would therefore also seem to be a given that those chosen to oversee such matters accept responsibility for revising whatever must be revised in order to insure that wholesale “forgetfulness” of the Way of Sacrifice will no longer be fueled under the reductionist rubric of “sufficient remembrance for sacramental validity.”

Way and Purpose

The Way Jesus suffers and dies is as much a part of the eternal unchanging essence of His Passion as is the Purpose of His suffering and death. Indeed, as noted above, His Way is intrinsic to His Purpose and vice versa. This being the case, both Way and Purpose should be remembered, re-presented, celebrated and given thanks for in the Eucharistic Prayer. Is it not incumbent upon all at a Eucharistic assembly to pay attention to what is in fact in front of them? Therefore, and again, does not the love of Christ compel those, whose duty it is to see to it that the Eucharist is all that it is supposed to be for the Christian Community, to make sure that matter and form are so arranged that the average person can with reasonable effort be attentive to what he or she is objectively in the presence of? And, should not this duty always include assuring attentiveness not only to the objective fact that Jesus suffers and dies for us, but also should it not foster attentiveness to the objective fact of the Way He suffers and dies for us, namely, rejecting violence, forgiving and loving His lethal enemies? Are not Way and Purpose historically and objectively, physically and metaphysically, theologically and spiritually, forever inseparable from each other? How then can a pastorally integral Eucharistic Prayer not honestly and self-evidently include both Way and Purpose?

Knower and Known

Without intending to embark upon an area that is outside the focus of these reflections on the Eucharist Prayer, I nevertheless think it appropriate to here point out that the Eucharist, like the Gospels, originates in a predominantly oral culture. Therefore the memory or remembrance that the original Apostolic tradition would have been preserving, narrating and passing on would have been an oral memory. Walter Ong, S.J., in his magisterial work, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982) demonstrates that

For an oral culture learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known; writing (however) separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for 'objectivity,' in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing... Writing fosters abstractions that disengage knowledge from the arena where human beings struggle. By keeping knowledge embedded in the human lifeworld, orality situates knowledge within the context of struggle.

It is difficult and may even be dangerous to try to love a text-based abstract concept, even if it is theological. It is, of course, possible to be grateful for a written abstraction. Most people are grateful for $E = mc^2$ or for the poet writing:

*The brain is wider than the sky,
For put them side by side
The one the other will contain
With ease, and you besides.*

But, the kind and degree of gratitude that flows from love for a person is beyond the ability of expository writing to elicit. Written narrative, however, can partially overcome the disengaged distance and depersonalization that exist between knower and known in expository discourse,

and can evoke levels of identification between knower and known that open the door to a deeper and more grateful person-centered love. The Eucharistic Prayer, institution narrative-anamnesis, in the primitive, oral Christian Community, obviously calls forth wholehearted love between the knower and the Known and obviously should call it forth in the contemporary literate Christian Community. But, does it?

The Preface for Christmas exhaltingly explains and proclaims: “In Him we see our God made visible and so are caught up in love of the God we cannot see.” How probable is it that a reductionist Eucharistic Prayer with a minimalist institution narrative-anamnesis can generate and nurture a love of God in which the Community will be “caught up” in love and gratitude? Must not the Eucharistic Community see and hear more of the nonviolent, long-suffering, forgiving love of friends and enemies “made visible” by the Incarnate Word at the supreme moment of the manifestation of such love, before it can be “caught up in love of the God we cannot see”?

Ong writes: “Oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld. A chirographic (writing) culture and even more so a typographic (print) culture can distance and in a way denature even the human.” The Second Vatican Council states: “Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 26). This is important because while it is true that the facticity of human existence requires that each person encounter reality uniquely to some degree, it is nevertheless clear that encountering reality alone in one’s room by the process of reading a printed page is not the same as encountering reality as a full participant in a celebrating-thanking faith Community that is struggling to know, love and serve God through His Incarnate Word. Reductionist Eucharistic Prayer, that contracts the entire Gospel narrative of God’s great deed of love in Jesus’ passion and

death into a few minimally descriptive printed words, which are then recited to the Community, simply cannot be evaluated as pastorally sound for a Eucharistic Community longing for and struggling for a deeper “closer, empathetic identification with the Known.” Certainly introducing into the institution narrative-anamnesis of the Eucharistic Prayer awareness of specifics of the Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies that the Incarnate Word enfleshed throughout His passion and death is as important and as needed a revision today as at another time was the revision that made the public presentation of the Eucharistic Prayer in the vernacular normal.

Mandatum for Change

Vatican II teaches: “The liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted and elements subject to change. The latter not only may but ought to be changed with the passing of time, if features have by chance crept in which are less harmonious with the intimate nature of the liturgy or if existing elements have grown less functional” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 21). The mandatum for the change being suggested in this essay is therefore contained in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. However, Vatican II’s mandatum is intrinsically and perpetually tied to the *novum mandatum*, “new commandment,” spoken by Our Lord at the Last Supper and proclaimed by the Catholic Church to “contain the entire Law of the Gospel” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ¶1970): “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (JN 13:34). Without an explicit and constant re-presentation of how Jesus loves, how is it possible for His new “*mandatum*” to be followed? Since the Eucharistic re-presentation of the passion and death of Jesus is ordained to action, to life, to the renewal of life, a faithful re-membrance is a *sine qua non* for fidelity to “the ways of Yahweh”—for fidelity to the *novum mandatum*. In the Christian life an accurate re-membrance of the past is an indispensable condition for a correct orientation in the present and for the

future. Beyond this, if as St. Augustine rightly states in the *City of God*, “[In the Eucharist] the Church itself is offered in what is offered” then does it not have to be made explicit what the nature and content of this Christ/Church offering is? Is it not the total offering of Community and self in, with and through Christ to unconditionally do the will of the Father, regardless of the sacrifice that may be required? But, it is the *novum mandatum* that “expresses the Father’s entire will” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ¶2822, 1970). So, how can the Eucharistic Community reasonably be expected to be “caught up in love of the God we cannot see,” and with full awareness and commitment make the offering it is called to make, if the love and truth of God “made visible” in Jesus’ passion and death is not “made visible” in the Eucharistic re-presentation of His passion and death—except for a compressed re-membrance devoid of any mention of the Way of sacrifice. Indeed, what does the petition to the Father to send down His Holy Spirit so that those who take part in the Eucharist may “become one body, one spirit in Christ” (Eucharistic *epiclesis*) mean, if it is not a request to empower the Eucharistic Community to live the *novum mandatum*? Surely, a truncated institution narrative-anamnesis is an “existing element” that can now be seen as “less functional” than other options, and hence “ought to be changed.”

Again, the validity of an abruptly concise, emotionally insulated, ethically colorless Eucharistic Prayer, institution narrative-anamnesis, is not the question. The issue is pastoral, which should not be taken to mean it is any less significant than the issue of validity (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11). The issue is what does a Eucharistic Prayer do which concerns itself in only a most cursory fashion with the Way of nonviolent suffering love of friends and enemies that Jesus undertook for the salvation of all? Does it help or hinder the intensity and the quality of the relationship between the knower and the Known? Does a terse institution narrative-anamnesis help or hinder the individual Christian and the Eucharistic Community in following the *new commandment* of

love “as I have loved” that is embedded in the Eucharist *in aeternum*? Does it help or hinder the reconciliation of people with each other, which is incontestably the will of God? Does it help or hinder our love for Jesus whom we can see, and through Him our love for “the God we cannot see”? Does it help or hinder growth in gratitude to the Father for all that has been done for us in love and out of love? Does a bland, detailed-depleted Eucharistic narrative help or hinder the Christian in establishing heart-to-heart contact with God?

Eucharist: The Arena of Struggle

Pope John Paul II in his 2004 World Day of Peace Message writes that, “Christians know that love is the reason for God’s entering into relationship with man. And it is love he awaits as man’s response.” This is incontestable truth. Indeed, the Latin word for “remember” is *recordari*, which literally means to bring back again (*re*) to the heart (*cor*). As Raniero Cantalamessa shows, Eucharistic remembrance “is not just an activity of the intellect, it is also one of the will and the heart; to remember is to think with love.” The issue is how deeply do Christians grasp this, and how much more profoundly could they realize it with a Eucharistic Prayer that daily and weekly enunciated the “mundane specifics” of the Way Jesus chose in obedience to the will of the God who is love (1 JN 4:16). Surely, a deeper, “closer, empathetic identification” with the Known (Jesus) would be established by a more fulsome institution narrative-anamnesis simply because it would generate new bonds of solidarity between knower and Known. It would bring the passion of Jesus into the very lifeworld of the Christian, “the arena where human beings struggle” against the very same spirits of evil with which Jesus contends in Gethsemane and on Calvary. It would bring to mind for the Christian, through the acting person Jesus—possibilities that are easily forgotten in this world. This in turn would open doors in “the arena where human beings struggle” to alternatives that would never otherwise be considered.

The Civilization of Love and the Banality of Evil

Enmity, violence and the lies, personal and systematic, which support these satanic realities, are the powers against which people struggle in their lifeworlds, personally and socially. Hannah Arendt, in her writing on the trial of Adolph Eichmann, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, coins the now famous phrase—“the banality of evil.” In what does this banality consist? It consists in a vast machine of ordinary people engaging in brutal enmity and violence without any explicit intention to do evil and without any pressing conscious awareness that evil is being done. When Bernard Häring writes, “The good news of peace and nonviolence plays a central role in Jesus’ proclamation of salvation... Redemption can no longer be treated without particular attention to the therapeutic and liberating power of nonviolence, as embodied and revealed by Jesus,” he is pleading that the Way of love “embodied and revealed by Jesus” be raised up before the world with persistence and clarity in order that “the murderous reign of hatred, violence and lies” be unmasked and denied allegiance. Where better to raise it up than in the Eucharistic Prayer, which is the very re-presentation of the unmasking of the diabolicalness of normalized enmity and violence, as well as the revelation of the power of the Way and the Person who unmasked and conquered it.

Does a Gospel-oriented mind need do any more than be in contact with the daily fare of news and entertainment via local and globalized mass media to be aware of the manner in which and the degree to which sanitized and sweetened enmity and violence are daily fed into the spiritual bloodstream of ordinary people in order to anesthetize them to what they are making of their own souls and the lives of others? The Church cannot match the powers of this world, mass-media minute for mass-media minute, in order to counteract this ceaseless input of utterly destructive images, mythologies and ideologies. But, the Church has a nonpareil power that is omnipotently superior to anything that mass

media and well-financed propaganda on behalf of the spirits of enmity and violence have available to them.

As an antidote to the poisonous parade of enemies that is manufactured almost daily through mass-media propaganda by governments, militaries and weapons-related industries, the Church has the Eucharist. The Church has the sacramental re-presentation of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Church has the Mass-medium of Jesus choosing a Way of nonviolent suffering and forgiving love of friends and enemies all the way to resurrection. The Church has a historical and Eucharistic Jesus who unmasks all forms of violence and enmity, for the ugly, sordid, anti-human, anti-God realities that they are. The Church has the Mass which can re-present daily to the peoples of the world the one and only Way to that vision of a “civilization of love” that Pope John Paul II—despite the disparaging reception he receives on this matter from the devotees of the realpolitik of enmity and violence—so vigorously insists must reign if humanity is to enjoy authentic and lasting peace. In the last paragraph of his 2004 World Day of Peace Message, the Pope offers an alternative vision of truth and hope to the narcotic glories of enmity and violence into which people are daily dragged and drugged:

At the beginning of a new year I wish to repeat to women and men of every language, religion and culture the ancient maxim: ‘Love conquers all.’ Yes, dear brothers and sisters throughout the world, in the end love will be victorious.

The love of which the Successor of Peter is speaking and to which he is calling human beings to awaken, is the love “embodied and revealed by Christ”—and no other. It is the love made visible in Gethsemane and on Calvary. It is the love that should be made readily visible, indeed magnified, at the Eucharist.

A Priority Task

Perhaps it should be considered a priority task by those in authority in each Church to act pastorally so as to give the Eucharistic Prayer “new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 4). This can be done by a simple Gospel addition to the Eucharistic Canon. This addition would assure that the nonviolent Spirit of the Holy, which guided and guarded Jesus through the violence and enmity of Gethsemane and Golgotha to His resurrection, is easily accessible through the Eucharist to all those human beings who, in solidarity with Jesus, long for peace and eternal life now and forever—but who are daily bedeviled by the cunning, ferocious and well-financed spirits of enmity and violence. In presenting to the Church at this hour in history a Eucharistic Canon that is specific about the nonviolent love of friends and enemies—which Jesus lives in conformity with the will of the Father from the start to the finish of His passion and death—Church leaders need have no fear that they are introducing something that is historically, biblically, spiritually or liturgically out of place. On the contrary all that is being done here is the pastoral “fleshing out,” via the presentation of incontestable Gospel specifics, truth that is already present in embryonic form in every Eucharist. To reiterate in part what has been previously stated by Rev. Frederick McManus, one of the most eminent Catholic liturgists of the Twentieth Century, regarding the need “to augment eucharistic anaphoras with some direct reference to...the nonviolence of the Gospel message”:

The centrality of the mission of peace and nonviolence in the Gospels needs to be acknowledged in the confession of the great deeds of God in the Lord Jesus, and the Christian people need to see this essential dimension of Eucharistic peace in the prayer which they confirm and ratify with their Amen.

The Catalytic Factor

Allowed by the decisions of those responsible in the Churches for seeing to it that the Eucharist confers upon lacerated and imprisoned humanity all that it was designed by its Creator to bestow, the Eucharist can be the nonviolent Exodus event for which not only Christians, but also humanity itself, will give thanks forever to the Father of all (EP 4:6). The addition of a minimal catalytic factor can oftentimes alter an entire reality. A poisonous toxin can be neutralized by the introduction of a small catalytic agent. A gene on DNA, that otherwise would be transcribed incorrectly or not at all, is transcribed correctly by the action of an integral catalytic factor. The presence of the proper catalyst has the potential for producing outcomes that are unrealizable in its absence. Catalysts, by their very nature, facilitate harmonious interactions between substrates, which ultimately make the impossible possible. A Eucharistic Prayer—candidly incorporating the nonviolent love that Jesus deliberately embraces throughout His passion and death—is the catalytic factor that will facilitate a union with the Divine that will provide the way out of the “virulent plague” of ceaseless, reciprocal homicidal enmity and the preparation for ceaseless, reciprocal homicidal enmity. It is the Way out because Jesus is the Way. And, Jesus is the Way because Jesus is God, Emmanuel, “God with us” in the flesh, showing us the Way beyond enmity and violence, evil and death by the concrete “mundane specifics” of His words and deeds. Indeed, the Way He reveals to us, the Way in which we are to “pick up our crosses” daily, leads ultimately to participation in the fullness of Life Eternal. The Banquet of the Lamb therefore must not only empower the Church on earth to live and to love in the Way of Jesus, but it must also reveal that Way of salvation and its Source without blemish or distortion, confusion or equivocation. To reiterate Pope John Paul II’s admonition,

The Eucharist is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation.