

EUCCHARISTIC DOCTRINE AND EUCCHARISTIC DEVOTION

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Although there are doubtless some (mostly Orthodox) who would disagree, it seems safe to say that, so far as the doctrine of the Eucharist is concerned, there is agreement between both Orthodox and Catholic: that is, we both affirm that that in the Eucharist Christ becomes present, in his full humanity and full divinity, as the Body and Blood of Christ, the elements of bread and wine having been changed by the Eucharistic prayer. Furthermore, this presence is not fleeting; the Holy Gifts are reserved and given as the Body and Blood of Christ. In addition, both Orthodox and Catholic are agreed on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. But what about devotion to Christ present in the Eucharist? More specifically, what about devotion to Christ's consecrated Body and Blood outside the Eucharist, which in the West is called 'extra-liturgical' devotion? There is a sense in which there is no extra-liturgical devotion to the consecrated Holy Gifts among the Orthodox; the sacrament is reserved in an artophorion kept on the holy table, but it receives no especial devotion separate from the Holy Table itself. This paper will concentrate on comparing the Western Rite of Benediction and, closely associated with this, the Exposition of the Host and Adoration, with the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in the East. Despite accord on doctrine, the nature of Eucharistic devotion expressed in these two rites is in most ways strikingly different.

I think I have taken the subject of our colloquy, *Mapping the Una Sancta*, in perhaps a slightly different way from most of us here. I understood Dr Sotiris Mitralaxis's suggestion, when he asked me to take place in the Syros Symposium, to be that we think ahead and begin to consider what the next steps might be if Catholics and Orthodox reached the conviction that there are no *doctrinal* differences between us. Judging from the abstracts, several have taken this to mean the papacy, looking at the last major issue—which is why Edward Siecienski's book on the papacy has been suggested as preliminary reading—and wondering if we are approaching this issue in the right way. I took Sotiris's suggestion in a different way: if we were agreed on doctrinal issues, are there other issues that might distinguish or even divide us? Issues where, although there is no real doctrinal disagreement, there are still differences of *ethos* or of devotion: what might these differences entail? My proposal is to consider this in relation to the Eucharist, for although there are doubtless some (mostly Orthodox) who would disagree, it seems safe to say that, so far as the *doctrine* of the Eucharist is concerned, there is broad agreement between Orthodox and Catholic: that is, we both affirm that that in the Eucharist Christ becomes present, in his full humanity and full divinity, as the Body and Blood of Christ, into

which the elements of bread and wine have been changed by the Eucharistic prayer (whether we understood the words of institution as words of consecration, as in the West, or see the change as the result of invocation, *ἐπίκλησις*, of the Holy Spirit, as in the East); furthermore, this presence is not fleeting: the Holy Gifts are reserved and given as the Body and Blood of Christ. In addition, both Orthodox and Catholic are agreed on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. But what about devotion to Christ present in the Eucharist? More specifically, what about devotion to Christ's consecrated Body and Blood outside the Eucharist, which is called in the West 'extra-liturgical' devotion?

Differences over the Eucharist between East and West have a long history, almost as long as any concern for the division between us has been felt. Traditionally, the main difference that focuses on the Eucharist has concerned the kind of bread used in the Eucharist, leavened or unleavened—the question of the *ἄζυμα*—and I have argued elsewhere that the difference involves more than the kind of bread used, but rather the *symbolic associations* of leavened or unleavened bread.¹ The bread used and consecrated in the Eucharist enters into a symbolic universe, and the presence or absence of yeast gives rise to different symbolic associations. Maurice de la Taille, a Jesuit theologian of a century ago—who is certainly worth revisiting—spoke of Christ in his own person wishing 'to become a sacrament, in order to be the efficacious sign' of the union between himself and all Christians. To that end, 'He placed himself in the order of signs, in the order of symbols, to have the joy of symbolizing and, by symbolizing it, of building up the mystical body of which we are members.'² On the question of leavened *v.* unleavened bread and the symbolism involved, I remarked:

Once unleavened bread was introduced, a powerful symbolism attached to it, and Paul's words in 1 Corinthians found a new resonance: 'Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole dough? Purge out the old leaven, that you may become new dough, just as you are unleavened. For Christ our Pascha is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not in the old leaven, nor in the leaven of evil and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Cor. 5: 6–8)—especially as the Latin text reads: 'Do you not know that a little leaven *corrupts* the whole dough?...' Two systems of symbolism, focused on the same liturgical act, developed, but they took their inspiration from the stark contradiction of leavened or unleavened bread.³

¹ See my *Greek East and Latin West: the Church ad 681–1071* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 306–18.

² Maurice de la Taille, S.J., *The Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion contrasted and defined* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), 212. For a recent discussion of his theology, see Michon M. Matthiesen, *Sacrifice as Gift: Eucharist, Grace, and Contemplative Prayer in Maurice de la Taille* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2013).

³ On the importance of symbolism in the dispute of the *azyma*, see John Erickson, 'Leavened and

The refusal, on either side, to enter one symbolic world or another could be presented as a fundamental apostasy. To the Greeks, the Latins, with their unleavened bread, were Judaizing, or shrinking from acknowledging the full humanity of Christ (an objection that worked better against the Monophysite Armenians, with whom the question of unleavened bread was first raised); to the Latins, the Greeks, with their leavened bread, were virtual Marcionites, discarding the Old Covenant, and rejecting Christ's fulfilment of the Old Covenant in celebrating the Passover with his disciples.⁴

It is not this issue, however, that I want to pursue now, but a rather different manifestation of difference, connected with the devotional attitude adopted towards the already consecrated Holy Gifts—a difference that also involves matters of symbolism (or so it seems to me).

For although both Catholic and Orthodox affirm clearly the Real and Enduring Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, this is expressed devotionally in markedly different ways in the Catholic Church (and many Anglican churches of an Anglo-Catholic bent) and in the Orthodox Church—by which I mean, in the way the Holy Gifts are reserved, in the way they are venerated, which, among Catholics involves visiting the Blessed Sacrament and praying before it, and in particular Solemn Exposition of the Host and the service of Benediction. Several converts to Orthodoxy from the Catholic West (including Anglo-Catholicism) have commented to me that it is this that, at least to begin with, they miss on becoming Orthodox (indeed, I found that myself). In Orthodox churches, although the Holy Gifts are reserved in a pyx, or artophorion, on the holy table, there is no specific veneration of the Holy Gifts, reserved on the Holy Table: the perpetually burning light is a mark of the sanctuary, within the sanctuary the holy table itself is venerated, the gospel book, the cross, the icons... but not specifically the reserved Holy Gifts. Except as part of one liturgical action: the celebration of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, which takes place two (occasionally, three) times a week during Lent. It might seem to be some kind of parallel to, or equivalent of, the Western service of Benediction: throughout the service the already-consecrated Holy Gifts are venerated, both with prostrations and with incense. It is also a deeply meditative service, a quiet service; this is noticed more, I suppose, by the celebrating priest, as, in contrast with the Divine Liturgy, he is not given lots of prayers to say quietly—he censes and venerates in silence. The structure of the service is a kind of extended Vespers, with small litanies after the three *staseis* of the *kathisma* of the psalter that is read as normal at Vespers. During each of these litanies, the priest, behind the iconostasis, prepares the paten with the Holy Gifts, solemnly censes the Holy Gifts on the holy table, takes it solemnly to

Unleavened: Some Theological Implications of the Schism of 1054', in idem, *The Challenge of our Past* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 133–55.

⁴ Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 314 (slightly modified for the new context).

the table of preparation, and completes the preparation there by filling the chalice with wine and water. Vespers continues with prayers of supplication, during which the holy table and the Holy Gifts are venerated, and then, after the readings and the usual litanies after the readings, there takes place the Great Entrance, as at a normal Liturgy. Only this time, it is the Holy Gifts themselves that are carried in procession and all prostrate themselves while the choir sings, instead of the Cherubic Hymn, this hymn:

Now the powers of heaven worship with us invisibly. For behold, the King of glory enters. Behold the sacrifice, mystical and fully accomplished, is escorted in. With faith and longing let us draw near, that we may become partakers of life eternal. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

There are two things that seem to me striking about these ceremonies. First, the clear and emphatic sense of the presence of Christ in the Holy Gifts, but more than that the sense not just of the *presence* of Christ, but the sense of the completion of the eucharistic sacrifice: Christ is present, the Lamb sacrificed from the foundation of the world. In the celebration of the Eucharist or Divine Liturgy we join in, we take part in Christ's sacrifice; at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, we are present at the eucharistic sacrifice, 'mystical and fully accomplished'. The lack of prayers for the priest underlines this sense that there is really nothing more to do: it is all done, both Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and the recalling, the re-presentation, of this in the Eucharist. Christ is present, but not just as a presence; he is present as the fully accomplished sacrifice. Secondly, the veneration of Christ in the Holy Gifts takes place liturgically—as part of the liturgical action, both behind the iconostasis in the first part of the service and then as the Holy Gifts are carried from the altar, through the body of the Church, and back to the holy table within the altar, whence they will be brought out as the Holy Gifts, offered to the Holy People of God: 'The presanctified holy things for the holy: *Τὰ προηγιασμένα ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις*'. The real presence is celebrated, not as just there, but as the presence of One who is coming to us, coming to encounter us, and give himself to us. Christ is the one who is coming, *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*—a term that is repeated throughout the Liturgy: in the creed, the 'one who is coming to judge the living and the dead', in the *Sanctus*, *Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, 'Blessed is he who is coming...' And then, as in the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Gifts are brought by the deacon, or the priest, through the holy doors to the people, with the exclamation: 'With fear of God, in faith and love draw near!' To which the response is: 'Blessed is He who is coming—*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*—in the name of the Lord.' Christ is the one who comes to us in the Holy Gifts, and at this point in the Liturgy all prostrate themselves before Christ who has come among us. In the Liturgy, we encounter Christ as he comes to us in the Holy Gifts and we receive them in Holy Communion: this is an encounter that enables us, as we go out

into the world (the true ‘liturgy after the liturgy’), to encounter Christ in those we encounter, especially those in need.

The Catholic service of Solemn Exposition of the Host, Adoration, and Benediction has both points of similarity and points of difference with the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified. The service of Benediction is one aspect of the sense of the enduring presence of Christ in the Host that is acknowledged all the time through habitual veneration. The perpetually burning light in the Church is understood in the West to be burning before the Blessed Sacrament, reserved in a tabernacle or aumbry: it is a mark of the presence of Christ in the sacrament of the altar. It is venerated when you enter the church, when you pass before it, by genuflecting. There is often a custom of visiting Christ in the sacrament: going into the Church to spend some time in silent prayer before Christ’s sacramental presence. The service of Solemn Exposition and Benediction is quite simple: after a few prayers, the priest takes the Host from the tabernacle and places it in a monstrance, where the Host can be seen (which is why the sacred vessel is called a monstrance), which is then placed on the altar; there follows a time of silence, which may be quite extended—several hours in some cases—at the end of which there are prayers, including a set prayer of praise, the so-called ‘Divine Praises’, and the singing of a hymn (in my memory the last two verses of a long and beautiful hymn, composed by St Thomas Aquinas, beginning *Tantum ergo sacramentum, / veneremur cernui*—‘Therefore we, before thee bending, / this great sacrament revere’. Aquinas wrote other hymns in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, including the sequence, the long hymn sung after the Epistle on the Feast of Corpus Christi, *Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem*—‘Praise, Sion, your Saviour’). During the singing of *Tantum ergo*, the priest blesses those present with the Host (hence, I suppose, the title of the service); then the monstrance is taken down from the altar, and the Host returned to the tabernacle. This service is usually described as an ‘extra-liturgical’ devotion. It has no particular place in the liturgical cycle of the Church, though mention just now of the Feast of Corpus Christi reminds one that, at least with this feast, room is made for devotion to the Body (and Blood) of Christ within the liturgical year of the West, for the Feast of Corpus Christi is a kind of displaced Holy Thursday celebration—on the first Thursday after the conclusion of the Paschal cycle, therefore, according the old Western liturgical Calendar, on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday (the Sunday *after* Pentecost, rather than, at least among the Slavs, another name for Pentecost itself). However, much of the traditional celebration on the Feast of Corpus Christi is extra-liturgical, with a procession throughout the town or village of the host in a monstrance at the head of the procession.

Extra-liturgical: that is the first of a number of contrasts one notices when one compares the Orthodox Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts with the Catholic rite of Exposition of the Host and Benediction, for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is thoroughly integrated into the liturgical year. It is essentially a Lenten service,

for during Orthodox Lent, weekdays from Monday to Friday are days on which the Divine Liturgy is not celebrated (in contrast with the West, where Lent is a period of special eucharistic devotion, with readings from the Epistles and Gospels provided for all the days of the week, in contrast with the rest of the year, when the Eucharistic lectionary only provided for Sundays: a distinction obliterated now, with a lectionary covering all the days of the year). The Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified is to make up for the lack of Eucharistic celebrations during Lent: nowadays in most weeks only on Wednesdays and Fridays (which has the odd effect in many parishes of making Lent a period of *more* frequent encounter with the sacrament than outside the aliturgical days of Lent; in particular the requirements of canon 66 of the Synod *in Trullo* that people should attend the Liturgy every day between Pascha and New [or Thomas] Sunday is now a completely dead letter).

There are plenty of other contrasts. Benediction essentially provides an opportunity for *gazing contemplatively* on the Host; in contrast, in the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified the Holy Gifts are never seen by the people—they are always veiled, furthermore, during the Great Entrance, where, though the procession goes round the church in the midst of the people, they are all meant to be prostrate before the presence of the ‘Sacrifice, mystical and fully accomplished’, and not to see anything at all. This contrast is part of a broader contrast between Eastern and Western Liturgical practice: in the East, the altar, or sanctuary, is visually separated from the nave by an iconostasis, whereas, in the West, the sanctuary is open to the people, a difference made more marked when the priest faces the people over the holy table, rather than standing with the people and facing East.

There is *movement* in the rite of Benediction, but it is purely functional (though not, I suppose, the processions that traditionally take place on the Feast of Corpus Christi); in the Liturgy of the Presanctified, movement, whether hidden away in the altar with the curtains drawn or through the church at the Great Entrance, is at the heart of what is taking place. I have already remarked that Christ is present in the Holy Gifts as *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, the one who is coming, whereas Benediction seems to focus on the bare presence of Christ in the Host: a presence that calls forth contemplative attention. There seems to me a similar contrast in the words with which the priest presents the sacrament to the people for communion: in the West, it is with the words, *Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi. Beati qui ad cenam Agni vocati sunt*—‘Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb’; whereas in the Orthodox Liturgy the words are more direct: ‘With fear of God, with faith and love, draw near’, to which the response is, as I have already remarked, ‘Blessed is He who is coming in the Name of the Lord’. On the one hand, look, *ecce*; on the other, draw near to the One who is coming.

One might argue, too, that the notion of the Eucharistic sacrifice is more evident in the Liturgy of the Presanctified, though the very term used in the West, Host,

hostia, connotes sacrifice, sacrificial victim, and Latin devotion to the Host is to the Host as sacrificed. Nevertheless, in the Liturgy of the Presanctified, Christ is perceived not just as present but as sacrificed: we are explicitly asked to behold, not just the presence of Christ, but the ‘sacrifice, mystical and fully accomplished’—*Ἴδου θυσία μυστική τετελειωμένη*.

And finally, the Liturgy of the Presanctified ends with Holy Communion; the Christ whose presence we have celebrated as the accomplished mystical sacrifice is given and received in Communion. I do not think Benediction ever ends with communion from the reserved sacrament: the Host is exposed for the contemplative gaze of the people, and then returned to the tabernacle. (I have not mentioned that the Host is just the consecrated unleavened bread, while in the Liturgy of the Presanctified, the Lamb that has been reserved is present in both kinds, consecrated bread intincted with the holy blood).

What kind of a contrast have we here? Is it a contrast of incompatible ways of devotion that could hardly be combined and perhaps could not even co-exist? There is certainly a contrast, and the emphasis on the contemplative gaze that lies at the heart of Benediction is something that relates more widely to ways of prayer within the Western tradition. What lies at the heart of the Liturgy of the Presanctified I find more difficult to capture, for the Presanctified Liturgy has its place in the liturgical experience of the Orthodox Church, and does not, I think, open out on to anything else. Both, however, could be said to present an opportunity to dwell on the completeness of Christ’s work of love on the Cross and in the Resurrection—giving space and time to absorb what all this means. Rather than come to any conclusion, I would rather hope my thoughts might lead into some discussion, dialogue, one with another.