

1 **THIS BREAD OF LIFE:**  
 2 **REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES ROMAN CATHOLIC-REFORMED**  
 3 **DIALOGUE ON THE EUCHARIST/LORD’S SUPPER**

4  
 5 (November, 2010)  
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## Section 1: General Introduction

1  
2 In the groundbreaking ecumenical document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982),  
3 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches declared as its aim “to pro-  
4 claim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible  
5 unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in  
6 Christ, in order that the world might believe.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church, in the  
7 Vatican Council document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,  
8 December 4, 1963) listed as two of its aims “to encourage whatever can promote the union of all  
9 who believe in Christ; [and] to strengthen whatever serves to call all of humanity into the  
10 church’s fold.”<sup>2</sup> In pursuit of these noble goals, we offer this report from the seventh round of  
11 dialogue between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and four denominations in  
12 the Reformed tradition: the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), the Presbyteri-  
13 an Church, U.S.A. (PC(USA)), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church  
14 of Christ (UCC).

15 This round of dialogue began with a discussion of the sacrament of baptism (2003-2007),  
16 which resulted in the report, “These Living Waters: Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition  
17 of Baptism.”<sup>3</sup> The present document concludes this round of ecumenical discussion with its re-  
18 port on the second part of the dialogue (2007-2010), which focused on what is commonly called  
19 the Eucharist in the Roman Catholic tradition and the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion in the  
20 Reformed tradition. We hope that this report is read by and benefits church leaders, pastors,

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<sup>1</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper, no. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), viii.

<sup>2</sup> No. 1 in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), 117.

<sup>3</sup> “These Living Waters: Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism” (report prepared during the seventh round of the United States Catholic-Reformed dialogue, 2008).

1 ministers, seminarians, and parishioners. We offer the report with the prayer that it will serve to  
 2 draw our communions closer to lived unity within the Body of Christ.

3 1a: Scope of the Dialogue on Eucharist/Lord's Supper

4 As we affirmed in our earlier report on baptism, "Baptism is the sacramental gateway in-  
 5 to the Christian life, directed toward the fullness of faith and discipleship in  
 6 Christ."<sup>4</sup> Together we understand that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist nourishes  
 7 believers to live their baptismal identity and commitment throughout their lives.

8 At the outset of our dialogue on the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, we agreed that we would  
 9 broaden our discussion to include key themes beyond those commonly considered. Many previ-  
 10 ous ecumenical discussions of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper have focused on the issues of the  
 11 "real presence" of Christ in the sacrament and on *sacrifice* and *offering*, since these have tended  
 12 to be areas of greatest divergence.

13 While we realize that the presence of Christ and sacrifice/offering are critical themes  
 14 needing our attention (and, indeed, they will be thoroughly discussed), we came to understand  
 15 that there is a richness to be uncovered by broadening our dialogue to include *epiclesis* (invoking  
 16 the action of the Holy Spirit), *anamnesis* (the act of remembering), and *discipleship* (the re-  
 17 sponse-action of believers).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, as we developed all five themes, we discovered that  
 18 they are not isolated but closely interconnected. Taken together, these themes offer a rich ap-  
 19 proach to the sacrament that points to a felicitous degree of ecumenical convergence.

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<sup>4</sup> "These Living Waters," 5.

<sup>5</sup> Significant scholarly work in recent decades by both Protestants and Roman Catholics has led to a new appreciation of the work of the Spirit in the Eucharist (especially with respect to the *epiclesis*) and to a richer understanding of the role of remembering (*anamnesis*) in Jewish and early Christian praying. These developments have led to liturgical changes in all of our communions and prompted the decision to incorporate these two themes so prominently in this report.

1           It is our hope that this report fairly represents each dialogue partner’s understanding of  
2 the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, and clearly states both points of agreement and those needing fur-  
3 ther dialogue. We recognize that there are other critical issues (e.g., ecclesiology, orders, actual  
4 divergence in practice) related to the sacrament. However, time and the mandate given to us by  
5 our respective churches have led us to limit our focus to these five themes. It is our prayerful  
6 expectation that future dialogue will be able to address these other significant issues.

#### 7   1b: Brief History and Development of the Sacrament

8           There is much documentation concerning the development of the ritual shape of the Eu-  
9 charist/Lord’s Supper across the centuries. This development shows increased understanding  
10 through ritual experience of and theological reflection on the meaning of the sacrament. It is not  
11 our intent to present this development in detail here. However, we believe it will be helpful to  
12 outline in broad strokes the development of the sacrament, for this not only points to a common  
13 early tradition we all share, but it also provides the basis on which we have structured the body  
14 of this report.

#### 15   **Earliest Practice**

16           Both scriptural and extra-scriptural evidence suggests that the earliest celebrations of the  
17 Lord’s Supper/Eucharist were simple “family” gatherings of about thirty to fifty people held in  
18 the larger homes of wealthier community members who were able to accommodate these num-  
19 bers. In response to Jesus’ command to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19), this  
20 shared meal ended with the blessing, breaking, and giving of bread and the blessing and passing  
21 of the cup (1 Corinthians 11:20-22). On the one hand, this meal was a continuation of the table  
22 fellowship so central to Jesus’ whole ministry, and, on the other hand, in some of the Gospels it  
23 was unmistakably linked to the Jewish Passover celebration.

1           In addition to the significance of the meal as a response to Christ's command to celebrate  
 2 in a remembrance of him, these gatherings were also significant because all present were to be  
 3 regarded as equals, regardless of their economic or social rank. Social distinctions were abol-  
 4 ished through baptism into Christ, and thus could have no place at the communion meal. Hence  
 5 Paul was dismayed at the behavior of the Corinthian community, where some had their fill while  
 6 others were shamed and went hungry.<sup>6</sup>

7           The late first-century *Didache*<sup>7</sup> indicates that the Christian community gathered on the  
 8 Lord's Day (14:1), and this gathering included confession of sins (4:14; 14:1), reconciliation  
 9 with neighbors (14:2), and making memorial of the Lord's sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> From this early, simple  
 10 description of the Supper as a memorial of the Lord's sacrifice celebrated in the context of a  
 11 household meal, sacramental theology and practice developed. Already in apostolic times, we  
 12 find leadership roles emerging—apostles, overseers (*episkopoi*), presbyters, and deacons—all of  
 13 which helped order the social and liturgical life of the early Christian communities. It is proba-  
 14 ble that by the turn of the first century (or shortly thereafter) this simple household meal had al-  
 15 ready begun to find structure as a eucharistic ritual, the main components of which are still rec-  
 16 ognizable today.

## 17 **Second to Fourth Centuries**

18           A number of changes took place during the period from the second to the fourth centu-  
 19 ries. These changes continued to move the sacrament away from a simple, though structured,  
 20 shared meal toward a more formal ritual. The meeting place changed from family homes to

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:20-22.

<sup>7</sup> While scholars disagree as to the exact date, most would agree that the *Didache* was redacted in the middle of the second century from previously existing manuscripts dating from the late first and early second centuries.

<sup>8</sup> *Didache* XIV, in J. Stevenson, ed., *A New Eusebius*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: SPCK, 1975), 129. Sections IX and X of the *Didache* show us something of the kind of text that was used for the liturgy.

1 house churches as Christian communities began to buy property and own buildings dedicated to  
 2 worship and other activities of the community. The meeting time changed from the evening  
 3 meal on the Sabbath to sunrise on the Lord's Day, reflecting a strong resurrection motif. During  
 4 this period, the following liturgical structure began to emerge: Scripture is read "as long as time  
 5 allows," after which the "president in a discourse admonishes and exhorts [us] to imitate these  
 6 good things"; prayers are offered and gifts are presented; the president offers prayers and thanks-  
 7 giving, followed by distribution of the communion elements; the elements are taken by deacons  
 8 to those who are absent; and a collection from the wealthy is taken up and given to the president  
 9 who helps those in need.<sup>9</sup> In this collection for the poor as an element of the rite, we note an on-  
 10 going concern that participation in the Lord's Supper include the community's caring for those in  
 11 need. By mid-second century, therefore, four main components of the liturgy were already in  
 12 place: introductory rites, word, sacrament, and dismissal, which included a collection for the  
 13 poorer members of the community.

#### 14 **Fourth Century and the Classical Structure of the Eucharist Liturgy**

15 Emperor Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 AD), which ended the era of persecution,  
 16 made possible a flurry of developments in Christian worship. As Christian communities grew,  
 17 they needed larger buildings and churches began to be constructed—at first along the lines of a  
 18 typical basilica, the standard architecture for public buildings at that time. With the growth of  
 19 the Church came also growth in the number of distinct Christian communities (for example,  
 20 Greek, Latin, Syriac). While there were unique features in the celebration of the sacrament in  
 21 each of these diverse communities, certain key elements were practiced in common:

- 22 • introductory rites

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<sup>9</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67:3-7, in *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, trans. and ed. R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987).

- 1 • proclamation of the word and preaching
- 2 • prayers of the faithful
- 3 • presentation and preparation of gifts (done in silence)
- 4 • prayer over the offerings
- 5 • *lavabo* (hand washing)
- 6 • kiss of peace
- 7 • reading of names of the living and dead (diptychs)
- 8 • the eucharistic prayer or great thanksgiving consisting of
  - 9 • introductory dialogue
  - 10 • preface
  - 11 • *epiclesis* (over the gifts as well as the assembly)
  - 12 • institution narrative
  - 13 • *anamnesis* (remembering)
  - 14 • offering
  - 15 • intercessions
  - 16 • doxology
  - 17 • the recitation of the Lord's Prayer by all
  - 18 • the breaking of the bread and mingling of the elements
  - 19 • preparation for and invitation to Communion
  - 20 • distribution of the elements
  - 21 • concluding blessing and dismissal

22 There are three key points to note about the development of sacramental practice and the-  
23 ology through the first several centuries of the Church's life. First, while prayers and actions

1 were added, the basic shape of the sacramental rite remained the same. Second, the sacrament  
 2 was understood theologically predominantly as a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ. Third, the  
 3 Eucharist/Lord's Supper was seen as transforming the assembly into being more perfect mem-  
 4 bers of the Body of Christ. St. Augustine says it eloquently (Sermon 272):

5       If you are to understand what it means to be the Body of Christ, hear what Paul has to  
 6 say: "Now you are the Body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians  
 7 12:27). If you are the Body of Christ and members of it, then it is that mystery which is  
 8 placed on the Lord's table: you receive the mystery, which is to say the Body of Christ,  
 9 your very self. You answer Amen to who you are and in the answer you embrace your-  
 10 self. You hear Body of Christ and answer Amen. Be a member of Christ's body, that  
 11 your Amen will be true.<sup>10</sup>

12  
 13 Participation in the Lord's Supper carried an ethical mandate to live as Jesus did, with particular  
 14 concern for those who are poor and oppressed.

15       This review of the first four centuries of practice and theological perspective on the  
 16 Lord's Supper provides a common foundation for the shape of this dialogue and the convergenc-  
 17 es that have emerged. Between the fourth and sixteenth centuries there were, of course, many  
 18 further developments in practice and theology related to the Lord's Supper. For our purposes,  
 19 we have chosen not to review these intervening centuries, but rather to move directly to the six-  
 20 teenth century in which emerged critical historical and ongoing divergences concerning the sac-  
 21 rament between Roman Catholics and the Reformed churches. These divergences have neces-  
 22 sarily given shape to our dialogue.

### 23 **The Reformation and Beyond**

24       In the 16<sup>th</sup> century both Reformed and Roman Catholic reformers attempted to address li-  
 25 turgical, theological, and practical concerns, but they did so in different manners. The Reformed

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<sup>10</sup> Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S., *Liturgy as Living Faith: A Liturgical Spirituality* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993), 101; translation author's.



1 reformers<sup>11</sup> believed that theological errors had crept into the celebration of the sacrament over  
2 the course of the centuries, such as a false understanding of the ordained ministry, of the Mass as  
3 a re-sacrifice, and of the real presence of Christ in the elements of bread and wine as expressed  
4 in the doctrine of transubstantiation. They also perceived certain abuses in the practice of the  
5 sacrament, such as private Masses and communion in which believers received only the bread.  
6 In response to these concerns, the Reformers simplified the structure of the liturgy, emphasizing  
7 the importance of worthy reception of the sacrament by the baptized and stressing the Lord's  
8 Supper as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and not an actual re-offering of it to God the Fa-  
9 ther. Meanwhile, at the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Roman Catholic Church attempted to  
10 clarify and thus define what it believed. Theological and ecclesial differences, therefore, created  
11 intense conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches of the Reformation, with  
12 each side defining its practice and theology of the sacrament explicitly in opposition to the other.

13         Since the period of the Reformation, both Roman Catholics and Protestants have gone  
14 through periods of renewed understanding and practice of the sacrament. Liturgical renewal,  
15 began already in the mid-eighteenth century in the Roman Catholic liturgical movement, was  
16 manifest in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, in the Protestant Mercersburg movement,<sup>12</sup>  
17 and culminated in the twentieth century at the Catholic Second Vatican Council. These devel-  
18 opments breathed new life into the celebration of the liturgy for Reformed and Roman Catholic  
19 Christians and created convergences in practice. Additionally, twentieth century ecumenical dia-  
20 logue has prompted us to re-examine our histories, traditions, and rites in search of common  
21 roots, and made us mindful of how sixteenth century conflicts have disproportionately focused  
22 on our differences. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics have ardently sought to develop a

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<sup>11</sup> Hereafter, the "Reformed reformers" will be referred to as the "Reformers."

<sup>12</sup> A "high church" confessional and liturgical renewal movement led by Philip Schaff and John W. Nevin at the German Reformed seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania.

1 new perspective on the old conflicts so that mutual understanding can be achieved and our unity  
2 in Christ advanced. Through this particular dialogue, we have come to a new appreciation of  
3 what the Lord has given us in the sacrament—the very gift of Christ, ever present to us and for  
4 us through the Holy Spirit, the source of our unity and common life as disciples of Christ.

#### 5 1c: Design of This Report

6 In the body of this report we present the Reformed and the Roman Catholic theologies  
7 and practices of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist with attention to five major themes: 1) *Epiclesis*—  
8 Action of the Spirit; 2) *Anamnesis*—Remembering; 3) Presence of Christ; 4) Offering and Sacri-  
9 fice; and, 5) Discipleship. As will be seen below, these themes are marvelously interconnected.  
10 Beginning with the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*), we remember God's mighty deeds  
11 (*anamnesis*), are attentive to the presence of Christ, offer ourselves with Christ as holy and living  
12 sacrifices, and are impelled to live the Eucharist/Lord's Supper in our daily journey to follow  
13 Christ faithfully as his disciples. Underlying and connecting all of these themes is the Reformed  
14 and Roman Catholic common emphasis on believers' mystical union with Christ.

15 Following the individual sections on the Lord's Supper/Eucharist from our respective  
16 traditions, we present the convergences, divergences, and mutual appreciations that have  
17 emerged from our focus on the five themes above. In the conclusion, we articulate the implica-  
18 tions of our dialogue for pastoral practice, and highlight those areas of theology and practice that  
19 are in need of further dialogue among our communions. We have also appended a chart in which  
20 our liturgies/rites for the Eucharist/Lord's Supper are presented side by side. This chart demon-  
21 strates the significant parallels in our celebrations of the sacrament that have emerged as we have  
22 sought to recover our common roots in the historic practices of the Church catholic.

1           We acknowledge, of course, with sadness, longing, and hope, that as Reformed and Ro-  
 2 man Catholic Christians we do not presently celebrate fully the Eucharist/Lord's Supper at a  
 3 common Table. The reasons for this are complex and deeply embedded in our distinctive histo-  
 4 ries and theologies. The goal of this report is not to explore or provide explanations for the pre-  
 5 sent situation. It is rather to present as clearly as we can an account of Roman Catholic and Re-  
 6 formed understandings and practices of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, so that we might grow in  
 7 mutual understanding, affirm what we hold in common, and invite our communions to remain  
 8 committed to the process of dialogue on this and other matters of critical significance as we seek  
 9 to make visible the gift of our unity in Christ.

## 10           **Section 2: Perspectives on Five Themes for Eucharist/Lord's Supper**

### 11                           2a: A Reformed Perspective on the Five Themes

#### 12   **Sources**

13  
 14           To discuss the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the Reformed confessions and liturgies is  
 15 a complex undertaking, since the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition has never had a single  
 16 confession or body of confessions, or liturgies to which all its denominations subscribe. Further,  
 17 each of our denominations has other constitutional sources (e.g. books of church order) that  
 18 ground our practices of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, we will limit ourselves here to those con-  
 19 fessions recognized in some way by the four Reformed denominations participating in this round  
 20 of dialogue; we will draw on our several liturgies for the Supper, and use other constitutional  
 21 sources from our particular Reformed traditions. Current liturgies for the Lord's Supper for  
 22 each of our communions are appended to the document in parallel form with one of the Eucharis-  
 23 tic Rites from the *Roman Missal*.

1           The primary or baseline confession will be the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563—for three  
 2 reasons. First, the Catechism is a kind of “ecumenical” Reformed confession, designed to repre-  
 3 sent and promote theological consensus among the Bullingerian, Calvinist, and Melancthonian  
 4 parties in the German Palatinate of the 1560s.<sup>13</sup> Second, the Catechism is still perhaps the most  
 5 widely loved and used Reformed catechism in the world today. Finally, it is the only common  
 6 confessional statement among the four Reformed denominations in this dialogue. The other con-  
 7 fessions we have consulted, and the denominations in the dialogue that recognize them as author-  
 8 itative sources,<sup>14</sup> are as follows:

- 9           • Scots Confession, 1560 (PC(USA))
- 10          • Belgic Confession, 1561 (RCA, CRCNA)
- 11          • Second Helvetic Confession, 1566 (PC(USA))
- 12          • Westminster Confession and Catechisms, 1648 (PC(USA))
- 13          • Evangelical Catechism, 1929 (UCC)
- 14          • Confession of 1967 (PC(USA))
- 15          • Our Song of Hope, 1978 (RCA)
- 16          • Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony, 1986 (CRCNA)
- 17          • Study Catechism 1998 (PC(USA))<sup>15</sup>

18  
 19 In addition to these confessional documents, we sometimes also cite the works of theologians  
 20 like John Calvin who have served as significant interpreters of the Reformed confessional tradi-  
 21 tion.

## 22 **Introduction**

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<sup>13</sup> See Lyle D. Bierma, *The Doctrine of the Sacraments in the Heidelberg Catechism: Melancthonian, Calvinist, or Zwinglian?* Studies in Reformed Theology and History, New Series, no. 4. (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> The first six of these confessions and catechisms have official or constitutional standing; the last three have been approved for study and use in teaching and worship.

<sup>15</sup> Lyle D. Bierma, “The Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confessions” (paper prepared for the U. S. Catholic-Reformed Dialogue, May 2008), 1.

1           The Lord's Supper in the Reformed tradition is a repeatable sacrament by means of  
2    which the triune God signs and seals to the faithful God's gospel promise.<sup>16</sup> As expressed in our  
3    historic confessions, the promise is that "our sins have been completely forgiven" through Jesus  
4    Christ,<sup>17</sup> and that "the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ"<sup>18</sup> so that in this mystical union we might  
5    share in "his true body and blood."<sup>19</sup>

6           Historically, our theology and practice of the Lord's Supper have focused on Christ's  
7    atoning death. Presently, our Reformed communions celebrate the Supper in remembrance of  
8    and in gratitude for Christ's whole life, person, ministry, and work, and in recognition that this  
9    Supper is a pledge and foretaste of the eschatological feast that God prepares. Those who par-  
10   take of the Lord's Supper in faith are granted and assured union with Christ, nourished in their  
11   communion with one another as members of the Body of Christ, and called to live in hope and  
12   service as Christ's thankful disciples every day.

13           At the Lord's Supper, the Church gathers to offer its thanksgiving, or Eucharist, and to  
14   receive what Christ through the Spirit offers there. At this Table, we acknowledge that Christ is  
15   the true host, present as both the giver and the gift. At this Table, we remember the Last Supper,  
16   at which Jesus pointed the disciples to his impending death through the signs of bread and wine,  
17   but we also remember and give thanks for his incarnation, earthly life and ministry, resurrection,  
18   ascension, and present and future reign. At this Table we are mindful of all the tables at which  
19   Christ served as host during his lifetime, inviting sinners and all who hunger for righteousness to  
20   break bread with him in celebration of the gracious, restorative hospitality of God. We are also

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<sup>16</sup>Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 66, in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive, 1988).

<sup>17</sup>Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 66.

<sup>18</sup>Belgic Confession, Art. 35, in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive, 1988).

<sup>19</sup>Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 79.

1 mindful that at this Table we share in the joyful, eschatological feast of the people of God who  
2 are being drawn by God from east and west, from north and south, to be transformed through  
3 true union with the risen Christ and communion with one another in all our rich diversity.<sup>20</sup> This  
4 mindfulness presses our Reformed communions to consider carefully what it means for the  
5 Church to receive all whom God gathers, and to extend Christ's welcome to this Table where he  
6 presides as host, offering his own body and blood—his own self—as holy, life-giving, commun-  
7 ion-creating sustenance for the world's peoples.

8         When we gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a worship service, we are already re-  
9 sponding to the grace of God who has created and called us to this place.<sup>21</sup> The liturgy begins  
10 with our praising God for this abundant goodness. Our acknowledgement of God's goodness  
11 and mercy moves us to confess together how far we fall short, and how much we ever stand in  
12 need of God's forgiveness in order to approach God at all. God answers our confession with  
13 words of pardon and assurance of forgiveness. As those who are forgiven and reconciled in  
14 Christ we are made worthy and ready to receive the living Word, first as it is proclaimed and  
15 then as it is offered in the sacramental meal.

16         As the liturgy moves to the proclamation of the Word, by the power of the Spirit we hear  
17 what the Lord has to say to us today. Through the accounts of God's dealings with the people of  
18 Israel and the early Church, and particularly through the testimonies regarding Jesus' life, death,  
19 and resurrection, we encounter again the living Christ. The promises we hear in proclamation  
20 are then sealed as we come to the Table and receive the signs of bread and wine. In the meal we

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<sup>20</sup> Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); United Church of Christ, *Book of Worship* (New York: United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership, 1986), 44.

<sup>21</sup> Some of our Reformed congregations celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly; others do not. Regardless of whether the Supper is celebrated, we respond to the proclamation of the Word with prayers of thanksgiving (Eucharist), intercession for the Spirit's work in us and the world, and the offering of our gifts and ourselves for God's use in the world.

1 see and touch the goodness of God in Christ—the same goodness we praise at the opening of  
 2 worship and hear in the Word proclaimed. From the Table, we intercede for ourselves and the  
 3 world, and are sent out to proclaim God’s gracious benevolence to the whole world, and with our  
 4 eyes newly opened to see the goodness of God already at work in all the places into which we  
 5 are sent.

6 In what follows, we summarize the Reformed theology of the Lord’s Supper with atten-  
 7 tion to the five major themes identified earlier: 1) *Epiclesis*—action of the Holy Spirit; 2) *Anam-*  
 8 *nesis*—remembering; 3) Presence of Christ; 4) Offering and sacrifice; and 5) Discipleship.

### 9 ***Epiclesis*—Action of the Holy Spirit**

10 With respect to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the work of the Holy Spirit figures  
 11 prominently in Reformed confessions and liturgies. It is only because of the mysterious and in-  
 12 comprehensible work of the Holy Spirit that those who come to the Table in faith truly receive  
 13 the gift that Christ by his Spirit there offers: his true body and blood as spiritual food for the spir-  
 14 itual journey; an ever deeper engrafting, or union, with his mystical body; and a strengthening of  
 15 faith for service in the Church and the world.

16 Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit the sacraments have no effect. Concerning the  
 17 Lord's Supper and what transpires there, the Scots Confession states:

18 This union and conjunction which we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the  
 19 right use of the sacraments *is wrought by means of the Holy Ghost*, who by true faith car-  
 20 ries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly, and makes us feed upon the  
 21 body and blood of Christ Jesus, once broken and shed for us but now in heaven, and ap-  
 22 pearing for us in the presence of his Father. . . . The Holy Spirit, who can never be sepa-  
 23 rated from the right institution of the Lord Jesus, will not deprive the faithful of the fruit  
 24 of that mystical action.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Scots Confession, Chap. 21, in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, part 1, *Book of Confessions* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2002), (emphasis added). See also the Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, in *Book of Confessions*, 5.196; Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 76, 79; Belgic Confession, Art. 33, 35; Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 67, 78. <http://www.creeds.net/reformed/belonging/catechismconfirmation.pdf>. (August 6, 2010)

1  
 2 Likewise, the Belgic Confession asserts that the sacraments are “visible signs and  
 3 seals . . . by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. So they are  
 4 not empty and hollow signs to fool and deceive us.”<sup>23</sup> The Reformed tradition confesses that the  
 5 Spirit labors ceaselessly in the Church through Word and Sacrament and in human hearts to  
 6 grant faith to those whom God calls. The Spirit is God’s free gift to the Church and is active in  
 7 the Body of Christ, unbidden. Yet, in their celebrations of the Supper, churches in the Reformed  
 8 tradition explicitly pray for the Spirit to come and act in the sacrament. Current liturgies in the  
 9 Reformed communions commonly include an *epiclesis* such as this one from the PC(USA):

10       Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine,  
 11       that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and  
 12       blood of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with the living Christ, and with all who are  
 13       baptized in his name that we may be one in ministry in every place.<sup>24</sup>

14  
 15 In light of such a prayer, we can ask just what the congregation is bidding the Holy Spirit to do  
 16 here? What is the action of the Holy Spirit? The short answer is simply, to effect the promise of  
 17 the sacrament. Calvin writes:

18       Now, that sacred partaking of his flesh and blood, by which Christ pours his life into us,  
 19       as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow, Christ testifies and seals to us in the Sup-  
 20       per—not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by *manifesting there the effectiveness*  
 21       *of his Spirit* to fulfill what he promises. And truly he offers and shows the reality there  
 22       signified to all who sit at that spiritual banquet, although it is received with benefit by be-  
 23       lievers alone, who accept such great generosity with true faith and gratefulness of heart.<sup>25</sup>

24  
 25       In the sacrament, the “effectiveness of Christ's Spirit is manifested” with respect to both  
 26 the signs and those who receive them. Christ has promised, says the Heidelberg Catechism, that  
 27 “as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves and taste with my mouth the bread

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<sup>23</sup> Belgic Confession, Art. 33. See also Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19, *Book of Confessions*, 5.180-181.

<sup>24</sup> “Great Thanksgiving,” in *Book of Common Worship*, 129.

<sup>25</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Lewis Ford Battles, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics, 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.17.10 (emphasis added). Significant phrases in this quotation are as follows in the original Latin text: *et quidem non obiecto inani aut vacuo signo, sed efficaciam spiritus sui illic proferens . . . . Et sane rem illic signatam offert et exhibit . . . .*



1 and cup of the Lord given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely he nourishes  
 2 and refreshes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood.”<sup>26</sup> Accord-  
 3 ing to Calvin, in the sacrament the Spirit *effects* that very promise of Christ, communicating  
 4 Christ's body and blood by means of the signs of bread and wine.<sup>27</sup> The effectiveness of the  
 5 Spirit is also manifested among believers who come to the Table insofar as faith is the gift of the  
 6 Holy Spirit, the gift by which Christ and his benefits are received.<sup>28</sup> So by the Spirit, by faith, by  
 7 the nourishment of our souls in the Supper with Christ's body and blood, we are ever more deep-  
 8 ly engrafted into the mystical Body of Christ so that we may “be the Body of Christ in the  
 9 world.”<sup>29</sup>

10 In the PC(USA)’s Great Thanksgiving prayer cited above, and in similar prayers from the  
 11 UCC, the Spirit is summoned explicitly upon the people and upon the gifts of bread and wine. In  
 12 some of our Reformed churches, the summons for the Spirit is explicit with respect to the people  
 13 and ambiguous with respect to the elements.<sup>30</sup> This reserve likely reflects a liturgical and theo-  
 14 logical anxiety about the prospect of suggesting that the Holy Spirit somehow “changes” the  
 15 bread and wine so that they themselves “become” the body and blood of Christ.<sup>31</sup> Yet even in  
 16 this form of the *epiclesis*, it cannot be doubted that the bread and wine are taken to be *true*  
 17 signs—instruments by which Christ through his Spirit works effectually. The action of the Holy

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<sup>26</sup> See also Belgic Confession, Art. 33, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Calvin writes, “For what is the nature of a sacramental union between a thing and its sign? Is it not because the Lord, by the secret power of this Spirit, fulfills what he promises?” *Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 3:209.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., The Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.200.

<sup>29</sup> See n. 28 above.

<sup>30</sup> The *epiclesis* in the RCA’s liturgy is: “Send your Holy Spirit upon us, we pray, that the bread which we break and the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the body and blood of Christ.” The *epiclesis* in the CRC’s liturgy is: “Show forth among us the presence of your life-giving Word and Holy Spirit, to sanctify us and your whole church through this sacrament.”

<sup>31</sup> See e.g., Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 78.

1 Spirit with regard to the sacramental celebration as a whole, which includes both the faithful and  
 2 the elements, is duly understood.<sup>32</sup>

3         Again, in offering the *epiclesis*, we are praying for the Spirit to effect the promise of the  
 4 sacrament. Nevertheless, we do not believe that, ultimately, it is *because* the people of God have  
 5 offered this prayer for the Holy Spirit to act, that the Holy Spirit acts, as if God acted at our be-  
 6 hest or fancy. God bestows grace freely and sends the Spirit freely—as God wills, when God  
 7 wills. This brings us to the more general question, “Why do Christians need to pray at all?” The  
 8 Heidelberg Catechism answers:

9             Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.  
 10             And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually  
 11             and groan inwardly asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them.<sup>33</sup>

12  
 13 The *epiclesis*, or prayer for the work of the Holy Spirit, is the last rhapsodic movement of the  
 14 Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. It is, in a strong sense, part of our liturgical thanksgiving. In of-  
 15 fering the *epiclesis*, we are indeed “groaning inwardly” to God (Romans 8:23), longing for God  
 16 to act by the Spirit to effect the sacrament and the sacrament's benefits for those who partake in  
 17 faith. We are “groaning inwardly” for God to act as God has promised to act. But we are also  
 18 expressing our thankfulness to God for having promised certain gifts, namely, *to send* the Spirit,  
 19 and by the Spirit, *to gift* us with the communion of Christ. We are expressing our thankfulness to  
 20 God for acting as God promises to act. In all this groaning and thanksgiving, we ultimately ex-

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<sup>32</sup> That is, most generally, in the Holy Spirit's being the bond of our union with Christ by or through whom all the benefits of Christ accrue to us; in the Spirit's prompting us to “lift up our hearts” and to pray; in the Spirit's being the one who “brings these things to remembrance and interprets to us the meaning of these events,” thus prompting our *anamnesis* (James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* [Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1996], 86); and in the Spirit's effecting our communion with Christ and prompting our response of self-offering in return (see e.g., Belgic Confession, Art. 33 and 35, where this may be inferred).

<sup>33</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 116.

1 press our trust in the promise of Christ: “If you ask anything of my Father in my name, he will  
2 give it to you” (John 16:23).<sup>34</sup>

3 Noteworthy here, especially because it is so central to the Reformed liturgical and theo-  
4 logical tradition, is the parallel between the *epiclesis* offered in the Lord's Supper and the *epicle-*  
5 *sis*, or Prayer for Illumination, offered prior to the reading and proclamation of the Word.<sup>35</sup> In  
6 his liturgy for the Lord's Day, Calvin instructs that before the sermon a prayer shall be offered by  
7 the minister in which “he begs God to grant the gift of the Holy Spirit, in order that his Word  
8 may be faithfully expounded to the glory of his name and the edification of the Church, and be  
9 received with becoming submission and obedience.”<sup>36</sup> One liturgy of the CRC opens such a  
10 prayer with: “Almighty God, grant us your Spirit, that we may rightly understand and truly obey  
11 your Word of truth.” So the people pray to God with respect to the proclamation of the Word  
12 and the communion of the Lord's Supper, petitioning God to send the Spirit in order that Word<sup>37</sup>  
13 and Sacrament might be efficacious in the lives of God's people.<sup>38</sup>

#### 14 **Anamnesis—Remembering**

15 Since the mid-twentieth century, ecumenical scholarship has recovered the Hebraic and  
16 New Testament understanding of *anamnesis* (remembrance), particularly as it relates to the

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<sup>34</sup> Referenced by Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 117. This theme is also explicated in the treatment of prayer in other Reformed confessions and catechisms, which cite not only John 16:23 but also Mark 11:24 and Matthew 7:7-8. See, e.g., the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 196 (*Book of Confessions*, 7.306), and the Westminster Confession, Chap. 9: “The Holy Spirit, *whom the Father is ever willing to give to all who ask him*, is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption” (*Book of Confessions*, 6.053; emphasis added).

<sup>35</sup> The Reformed tradition has always embraced Calvin's maxim that “the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace” (*Institutes*, 4.14.17).

<sup>36</sup> Calvin, “Forms of Prayer for the Church,” in *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1958).

<sup>37</sup> In terms of preaching, the Reformed tradition understands that the Word is proclaimed by Christ himself through the minister, who is his mouthpiece or instrument. See, e.g. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.3.1 (in which Calvin speaks of ministers as those who “represent his [Christ's] person”), 4.8.2., and even 4.14.11. The catechisms and confessions reflect this in their expositions of “The Word of God” or “Holy Scripture.” See, e.g., Second Helvetic Confession, Chap.1, *Book of Confessions*, 5.001ff.

<sup>38</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 157, *Book of Confessions*, 7.267. See also the first paragraph under “The Word of God in Proclamation and Sacrament” in the RCA Directory for Worship. <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=1864> (August 6, 2010).

1 Church's celebration of the Lord's Supper. These studies address both the nature and the scope  
 2 of remembering, and have prompted our Reformed communions to explore our own liturgies and  
 3 confessional traditions in order to deepen our understanding and practice of remembrance in the  
 4 Lord's Supper. The central shift is away from viewing the Supper as a human act of bringing to  
 5 mind the past event of Christ's sacrificial death—an act of human memory—toward a recogni-  
 6 tion that the remembrance that takes place is a making present of and a participation in the per-  
 7 son of Christ and his work through the Spirit. Succinctly stated, "The word *anamnesis* . . . does  
 8 not simply denote recollecting some remote date of bygone history. . . . Rather, it means remem-  
 9 bering in such a way that we see our participation in the past event and see our destiny and future  
 10 as bound up with it."<sup>39</sup> The Church's act of remembering past, present and future becomes the  
 11 means by which we realize "our participation and fellowship in . . . Christ [through] the work of  
 12 the Holy Spirit."<sup>40</sup>

13 The Reformed tradition has always had a strong sense of remembrance as an essential  
 14 aspect of the Lord's Supper, which derives from Christ's own words of institution in the gospel  
 15 accounts of the Last Supper. This emphasis on remembrance, however, has often been under-  
 16 stood in a minimalist way as "mere memorial," particularly associated with the theology of  
 17 Zwingli.<sup>41</sup> "Mere memorial" has been construed as the act of the congregation simply recalling  
 18 the sacrificial death of Jesus.

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<sup>39</sup> Torrance, *Worship*, 84-85.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>41</sup> Some recent scholars, however, have challenged this characterization of Zwingli's eucharistic theology, suggest-  
 ing that he was no "mere" memorialist. For instance, Swiss historical theologian Gottfried Locher points out that  
 "for the humanist, Platonizing, student of Augustine, *memoria* ['remembrance'] does not mean a retrospective look-  
 ing back but a re-presenting, an effective presence of the suffering of the Lord." *Streit unter Gästen* (Zurich: Theol-  
 ogischer Verlag, 1972), 10-11. Rereadings of Zwingli by Jaques Courvoisier (*Zwingli: A Reformed Theologian*  
 [Richmond: John Knox, 1963]) and Julius Schweizer (*Reformierte Abendmahlsgestaltung in der Schau Zwinglis*  
 [Basel: Reinhardt, 1954?]) also move beyond the old caricature, enriching contemporary Reformed understandings  
 of *anamnesis*.

1           Whatever the Reformers meant by remembrance, they certainly did not mean that the  
 2 benefits of the Supper depended primarily on the congregation’s willful acts of memory and de-  
 3 votion. The Reformers and the Reformed confessions make clear that the remembrance that oc-  
 4 curs in the Supper is grounded in the action of God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the  
 5 Spirit who enables us to realize “our participation and fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. . . .  
 6 He brings these things to our remembrance and interprets to us the meaning of the events. We  
 7 remember Christ—yet it is not so much we who remind ourselves of these events, but Jesus  
 8 Christ, who brings his passion to our remembrance through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>42</sup> In this sense, the  
 9 Holy Spirit makes the redeeming work of Christ present to the congregation, and communicates  
 10 here and now the benefits of what has already been accomplished and completed in Christ’s once  
 11 and for all sacrifice on the cross. The *anamnesis* is a re-presentation of Christ and his benefits  
 12 through Word and sacramental signs in the power of the Spirit. As Calvin describes it, “the  
 13 bread and wine are visible signs which represent to us the body and the blood. . . . It is therefore  
 14 for good reason that the bread is called ‘body’ since not only does it represent it to us, but also  
 15 presents it.”<sup>43</sup>

16           Having shown that the fruits of remembrance depend on the Spirit’s action in the Supper,  
 17 we also note that in the Reformed tradition the congregation is not only acted upon but also  
 18 shares in these acts in the remembrance. Through its participation in the sacramental remem-  
 19 brance and re-presentation of the work of Christ, the congregation submits and opens itself to the  
 20 work of the Spirit, who makes Christ’s one perpetual sacrifice<sup>44</sup> efficacious for their communal

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<sup>42</sup> Torrance, *Worship*, 86.

<sup>43</sup> John Calvin, “Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. and ed. J. K. S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 147.

<sup>44</sup> John Calvin, “Catechism of the Church in Geneva,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. by J.K.S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, XXII (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 137. This language of “[the](#) one perpetual sacrifice” allows us to talk about remembrance in a way that recognizes our participation in Christ’s sacrifice here

1 and individual lives. The congregation receives this remembrance as gift and shares in this sa-  
 2 cred rehearsal and representation of salvation history. At a deeper level, as we take Christ's  
 3 body and blood, once offered on the cross for our salvation, "we see ourselves made partakers in  
 4 it [and] may assuredly conclude that the power of his life-giving death will be efficacious in  
 5 us."<sup>45</sup> As the congregation remembers the redeeming work of Christ and communes at the Ta-  
 6 ble, the Spirit nourishes them with Christ's own body and blood, deepens their union with Christ,  
 7 assures them of their participation in the person and work of Christ, and manifests this participa-  
 8 tion through their witness and service in the world. As the PC(USA)'s *Directory for Worship*  
 9 puts it, "In remembering, believers receive and trust the love of Christ present to them and to the  
 10 world; they manifest the reality of the covenant of grace in reconciling and being reconciled; and  
 11 they proclaim the power of Christ's reign for the renewal of the world in justice and in peace."<sup>46</sup>

12 As we consider *what* is being remembered in the Lord's Supper, we will see that our cur-  
 13 rent liturgies and theology expand on the Reformers' overwhelming emphasis on remembering  
 14 the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Westminster Confession reflects the  
 15 core Reformed sense of the Supper, which was "instituted for the perpetual remembrance of the  
 16 sacrifice of [Christ] himself in his death" for the forgiveness of sin.<sup>47</sup> In the Reformed under-  
 17 standing of the Supper, the re-presentation of Christ's death is not a re-sacrifice. Rather, Christ  
 18 gives himself in the present "as the one who has already given himself to us, unsurpassably, in  
 19 his life, death and resurrection."<sup>48</sup> This sacramental self-giving "does not repeat the unrepeata-

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and now. Christ is not re-sacrificed. Rather, the effects of his sacrifice are perpetually realized in the Supper, through the Holy Spirit.

<sup>45</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.1.

<sup>46</sup> *Directory for Worship*, W-2.4004.

<sup>47</sup> Westminster Confession, Chap. 31/29, *Book of Confessions*, 6.161.

<sup>48</sup> George Hunsinger, "The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54, no. 2 (2001): 170.

1 ble, but it does attest what it mediates, and mediate what it attests—the one whole Jesus Christ,  
2 who in his . . . humanity, his body and blood, is at once both the Giver and the Gift.”<sup>49</sup>

3 This focus on remembering in the Supper Christ’s perfect, once for all sacrifice for the  
4 sin of the whole world testifies to the Reformed tradition’s recognition of the pervasive, devas-  
5 tating reality of human sin, the inability of human beings to free themselves from their sin and  
6 guilt, and the immensity of God’s grace in overcoming sin and restoring relationship in Christ,  
7 through the Spirit. Without losing this central focus, recent scholarship has broadened our sense  
8 of *anamnesis* in the Lord’s Supper and is reflected in the most recent communion liturgies of our  
9 Reformed churches. This is exemplified in one of the prayers of the PC(USA) as it moves from  
10 opening thanks to God for creation, through the *Sanctus*, to a full recounting of Jesus’ ministry:

11 He lived as one of us, knowing joy and sorrow. He healed the sick, fed the hungry,  
12 opened blind eyes, broke bread with outcasts and sinners, and proclaimed the good news  
13 of your kingdom to the poor and needy. . . .<sup>50</sup>  
14

15 Following the words of institution, the prayer continues, “Remembering your gracious acts in  
16 Jesus Christ, we take from your creation this bread and this wine.”<sup>51</sup> The “gracious acts” clearly  
17 refer not only to the sacrificial death of Jesus, but also to the entire shape of his life and ministry.  
18 Similarly, the “Meaning of the Sacrament” in the RCA’s communion liturgy recalls the full  
19 scope of Christ’s incarnate presence and work:

20 We come in remembrance that our Lord Jesus Christ was sent of the Father into the world  
21 to assume our flesh and blood and to fulfill for us all obedience to the divine law, even to  
22 the bitter and shameful death of the cross. By his death, resurrection, and ascension he  
23 established a new and universal covenant of grace and reconciliation that we might be ac-  
24 cepted of God and never be forsaken by him.”<sup>52</sup>  
25

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> “Great Thanksgiving A,” in *Book of Common Worship*, 70.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>52</sup> *Worship the Lord*, ed. Eric Routley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 567.

1           The effect of this expanded *anamnesis* is to deepen our understanding and assure us of  
 2 our union with and participation in the whole Christ—his person, his salvific work in history,  
 3 and the benefits he has won and now grants through the Spirit. For the sixteenth-century Re-  
 4 formers, remembering focused primarily on the once for all nature of Christ’s sacrifice, so it has  
 5 been salutary to see the fuller remembrance of Christ’s work in our recent liturgies. In addition,  
 6 contemporary reflections on *anamnesis*, both Catholic and Protestant, have introduced an escha-  
 7 tological dimension to the Church’s acts of remembering. At the Table, we not only recall the  
 8 past and receive Christ here and now, but also remember the promises that God has made for the  
 9 Church’s and the world’s future. At the Table we remember and pray for that day when heaven  
 10 and earth will be made new, God’s glorious reign will be complete and uncontested, human suf-  
 11 fering and tears shall be no more, and the unity of Christ’s Church will be manifested as all gath-  
 12 er at the one, joyful banquet feast of the Lamb. As we gather at the Lord’s Table in the present  
 13 we receive this eschatological reality as both gift and obligation.

#### 14 **Presence of Christ**

15           Churches of the Reformed tradition affirm the true presence of Christ in every service of  
 16 worship and in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>53</sup> We confess that Christ is the one who  
 17 welcomes those who gather, and it is Christ, through the minister, who proclaims the Word and  
 18 hosts those who have gathered in faith at his Table.<sup>54</sup> In the same way that Christ, in his person  
 19 and by his power (*virtus*), is present to all creation, Christ, in his person and by his power, is pre-

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<sup>53</sup> Belgic Confession, Art. 35; Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.205.

<sup>54</sup> As also noted below (p. 70, note 171), among the Reformed churches represented in this dialogue, the celebration of the sacrament is provided for and overseen not only by the minister, but also by elders, deacons and/or other authorized lay persons.



1 sent in, among, and to the gathered fellowship.<sup>55</sup> Such presence is effected by the incomprehen-  
 2 sible agency (*virtus*) of the Holy Spirit.<sup>56</sup>

3 With respect to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Christ himself invites us to the Table,  
 4 and, by the incomprehensible power of his Spirit, nourishes us with his body and blood, which is  
 5 food for the soul just as bread and wine are “aliments” for the body.<sup>57</sup> The bread and wine are  
 6 true signs by which Christ himself, at the hand of the minister,<sup>58</sup> effectively proffers<sup>59</sup> his body  
 7 and blood as spiritual food.<sup>60</sup>

8 In this sense, these signs, or elements, are efficacious, though not efficacious of them-  
 9 selves. Rather, God in Christ has designated them for the purpose of communicating spiritual  
 10 food,<sup>61</sup> and the Spirit uses them as instruments to this end. The minister speaks the Words of In-  
 11 stitution as God's word, and it is this word which sets apart, or “consecrates,” common, ordinary  
 12 bread and wine for an uncommon, extraordinary purpose<sup>62</sup>: namely, the true communication of

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<sup>55</sup> Calvin, “The Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. and ed. J. K. S. Reid, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 137 (Q & A 354-55); Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 47.

<sup>56</sup> Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.198. Scots Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 3.21.

<sup>57</sup> Heidelberg Confession, Q & A 75; Belgic Confession, Art. 35; Calvin, “Catechism,” 135-36 (Q & A 341).

<sup>58</sup> Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19., states that we receive the sacraments “as from the hand of God” and that “the substance of the sacraments is given [us] by the Lord” (*Book of Confessions*, 5.173, 174; see also Chap. 21). Calvin (*Institutes*, 4.3.1) also speaks of ministers as those who “represent his [Christ's] person.” With regard to the Lord's Supper itself, Calvin writes in his commentary on Isaiah 6:7: “By the hand of the minister he presents to us his body, that it may be actually enjoyed by the godly.” *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1850), 1:211.

<sup>59</sup> In his treatments of the Lord's Supper, Calvin frequently employs cognates of the Latin word *exhibere*, which means “to offer, to proffer, to hand over” and not merely “to exhibit,” as in “to represent.”

<sup>60</sup> Belgic Confession, Art. 33.

<sup>61</sup> Calvin, “Catechism,” 135-36 (Q & A 341); Westminster Confession, Chap. 29/27 (*Book of Confessions*, 6.151): “The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them,” but the “efficacy of a sacrament” depends upon “the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution.” See also Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 161, *Book of Confessions*, 7.271.

<sup>62</sup> So the Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19, “The Consecration of the Sacraments” (*Book of Confessions*, 5.178): “For they are consecrated by the Word, and shown to be sanctified by him who instituted them. To sanctify or consecrate anything to God is to dedicate it to holy uses; that is, to take it from the common and ordinary use, and to appoint it to a holy use. For the signs in the sacraments are drawn from common use, things external and visible. . . In the Lord's Supper, the outward sign is bread and wine, taken from things commonly used for meat and drink; but the thing signified is the body of Christ which was given, and his blood which was shed for us, or the commun-

1 Christ's body and blood as food for our souls.<sup>63</sup> The people ask God to send the Spirit (*epiclesis*)  
 2 so that “the bread which we break and the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of  
 3 the body and blood of Christ.”<sup>64</sup> Calvin writes regarding this mystical communion, or nourish-  
 4 ing:

5 Christ does not simply present to us the benefit of his death and resurrection, but the very  
 6 body in which he suffered and rose again. I conclude, that Christ's body is *really*, (as the  
 7 common expression is)—that is, *truly* given to us in the Supper, to be wholesome food  
 8 for our souls. I use the common form of expression, but my meaning is, that our souls are  
 9 nourished by the substance of the body, that we may truly be made one with him, or,  
 10 what amounts to the same thing, that a life-giving virtue from Christ's flesh is poured into  
 11 us by the Spirit, though it is at a great distance from us, and is not mixed with us.<sup>65</sup>  
 12

13 The foregoing discussion, of the consecration of the elements as effective signs and the  
 14 “true communication” of Christ's body and blood by their means, raises the question of the rela-  
 15 tion between the sign and the thing signified. For Calvin, whose view is embraced by the Re-  
 16 formed churches gathered in this dialogue, sacramental signs can be distinguished from that  
 17 which they signify, but they cannot be separated from it. The sign and the thing signified are  
 18 conjoined such that the thing signified is offered to and received by the believer simultaneously  
 19 with the sign. So sacraments are, in the strong sense, a “means of grace.” They are instruments

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ion of the body and blood of the Lord.” See also Westminster Confession, Chap. 29/27, *Book of Confessions*, 6.151, and Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 169, *Book of Confessions*, 7.279.

<sup>63</sup> Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.194.

<sup>64</sup> Liturgy of the RCA. See also the liturgies of the other Reformed churches in this dialogue in the appendix.

<sup>65</sup> John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, ed. D. W. and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 246.

1 through which the Holy Spirit effectively conveys the spiritual reality they promise.<sup>66</sup> Following  
 2 Calvin, many Reformed confessions emphatically declare that the signs are “not empty.”<sup>67</sup>

3 Even as we affirm that Christ, in his humanity, has ascended to heaven, we also confess  
 4 that Christ is truly present at the Table to nourish us with his body and blood, the gift that Christ  
 5 truly offers and truly communicates by the secret, miraculous, and incomprehensible power of  
 6 the Holy Spirit. As the Belgic Confession states, “Jesus Christ remains always seated at the right  
 7 hand of God his Father in heaven—but he never refrains on that account to communicate himself  
 8 to us through faith.”<sup>68</sup> On the one hand, the Reformed tradition seeks to maintain the truth of  
 9 Christ’s incarnation and full humanity following his ascension as the guarantee that “we have our  
 10 flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he [Christ] will also take us up to himself...”<sup>69</sup> If Christ has  
 11 a flesh like ours and is “seated at the right hand of God the Father,” then Christ cannot be literal-  
 12 ly, physically present in the aliments of bread and wine. On the other hand, the Reformed faith  
 13 is insistent that in the Spirit’s power Christ is truly present and truly nourishes the faithful with  
 14 his own flesh and blood in the Supper.

15 In a manner of speaking, Christ, by the indwelling of his Spirit, is also present in those  
 16 who come to the Table in faith.<sup>70</sup> Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, believers have already

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<sup>66</sup> This paragraph is based on Bierma, “Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confessions.” In this paper, Bierma examines various views held in the Reformed tradition. See also Brian A. Gerrish, “Sign and Reality: The Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confessions,” in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982); Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953; Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1982); Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*, trans. John Hoffmeyer, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); and Paul Rorem, “*The Consensus Tigurinus* (1549): Did Calvin Compromise?” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>67</sup> For example, Belgic Confession, Art. 33, states: “So they are not empty and hollow signs to fool and deceive us, for their truth is Jesus Christ, without whom they would be nothing.”

<sup>68</sup> Belgic Confession, Art. 35. See also Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 49, 76.

<sup>69</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 49.

<sup>70</sup> Calvin, “Catechism,” 136 (Q & A 344); Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 76. We recognize (e.g., with Calvin) that the gathered body is a *corpus permixtum*, an issue that became important regarding the *manducatio indignorum/impiorum*. See e.g., Belgic Confession, Art. 35; Westminster Confession, Chapter 31/29.7, *Book of Confessions*, 6.167; Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19, 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.183, 204.

1 been gifted with faith and engrafted into the mystical Body of Christ. With the mouth of this  
 2 faith, then, they truly feed on what is truly offered by Christ at his Table, his true body and  
 3 blood, as spiritual food for the spiritual journey.<sup>71</sup>

4         However, those who come to the Table come not alone but in the fellowship of their local  
 5 congregation and in the company of all the faithful in heaven and on earth. That is to say, the  
 6 true Church of all times and places encompasses all those engrafted into Christ's mystical body.  
 7 We come mindful of this “communion of the saints” gathered at the Table to be nourished by  
 8 Christ. Indeed, the Supper effects our deeper engrafting into this mystical Body of Christ, bind-  
 9 ing us to each other and summoning us to our mutual calling. The Westminster Confession says  
 10 that Christ instituted the Supper to “seal” to believers “their spiritual nourishment and growth in  
 11 him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him; and to be a bond and  
 12 pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body.”<sup>72</sup>  
 13 Among the “duties” owed to Christ because of our engrafting in his mystical body is our partici-  
 14 pation in and embodiment of Christ's ministry in the world, just as expressed in the *epicleses* of  
 15 our liturgies:

16             By your Spirit make us one with Christ, that we may be one with all who share this feast,  
 17             united in ministry in every place. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be  
 18             the Body of Christ in the world.<sup>73</sup>

19  
 20 Having encountered Christ's presence at the Table, believers are sent forth, in union with Christ,  
 21 to manifest Christ's presence in the world.

22             We realize that this engrafting into Christ, which the Supper effects, and Christ's ministry  
 23 in the world, which we embody, will not come to complete fruition until the eschaton. So in ex-  
 24 pressions such as “Come, Christ Jesus!” and “Christ will come again!” and “until Christ comes,”

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<sup>71</sup> Scots Confession, Chap. 21 (*Book of Confessions*, 3.21): “True faith apprehends Christ Jesus.”

<sup>72</sup> Westminster Confession, Chap. 31/29, *Book of Confessions*, 6.161.

<sup>73</sup> PC(USA) Liturgy. See also those of the other traditions in the appendix.

1 the liturgies confess eschatological longing for the coming of Christ, for the renewal of all crea-  
 2 tion according to God's final vision, and for our union with Christ in all its fullness.<sup>74</sup> Further,  
 3 the disparity between the true presence of Christ by his power and Spirit in the Supper, and the  
 4 fact that Christ has physically ascended and “remains seated at the right hand of God his Father  
 5 in heaven...,”<sup>75</sup> is the reality that underlies—and indeed compels—the eschatological longing  
 6 inherent to this sacramental celebration.

### 7 **Offering and Sacrifice**

8       Offering and sacrifice are prevalent in both Reformed confessions and liturgies for the  
 9 Lord's Supper. As noted in our discussion of *anamnesis*, there has been a gradual shift in the  
 10 Reformed tradition from an emphasis on simply the atoning sacrifice of Christ for the for-  
 11 giveness of sins to a recognition of the breadth of the redeeming work of Christ: his incarnation,  
 12 ministry, passion, resurrection, and ascension. So also with offering. There has been a broaden-  
 13 ing of our understanding that now embraces the fullness of God's gift given in Christ—not only  
 14 forgiveness of sin, but also reconciliation, unity, and life eternal.

15       Reformed sacramental theology stresses God's initiative in the offering of grace, a divine  
 16 initiative to which we respond in faith, gratitude, and discipleship. Drawing from Reformed con-  
 17 fessions and liturgies, we highlight several senses in which offering takes place in the Supper.  
 18 These various senses follow a progression from grace to gratitude, from gift to response. This  
 19 progression also reflects the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving in our Lord's Supper liturgies:

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<sup>74</sup> “A Formula of Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ on entering into full communion on the basis of *A Common Calling* [1997],”<sup>10</sup> (citing the Leuenberg Agreement [1973], II.2.15, 16). <http://oga.PCUSAPCUSA.org/ecumenicalrelations/resources/formula.pdf> (August 13, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> Belgic Confession, Art. 35: “Jesus Christ remains always seated at the right hand of God his Father in heaven—but he never refrains on that account to communicate himself to us through faith.” See also Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 49, 76. The Reformers were insistent that if indeed Christ is human in exactly the ways we are human, if his flesh is our flesh and he has ascended to “heaven” and remains there, then he cannot be literally, physically present in the aliments of bread and wine.

1 God offers the gift of creation and of life itself;

2 God offers the gift of hope and renewal throughout salvation history;

3 Christ offers a sacrifice in taking our nature, living, dying, and being raised on behalf of  
4 God's people;

5  
6 In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers and we receive both Christ and Christ's benefits of  
7 forgiveness, renewal, reconciliation, unity, communion, victory over death, eternal life,  
8 and love;

9 In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit is offered or poured out so that the bread and wine are for  
10 us the communion of the body and blood of Christ;

11 In response, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices of thanksgiving—in the Lord's Supper  
12 and in all of life—in acts of love and justice. We become the Body of Christ in the world.

### 13 *God Offers the Gift of Creation and of Life Itself*

14 Reformed confessions present God as the creator and giver of life. When God, who is  
15 “completely . . . good, and the overflowing source of all good,”<sup>76</sup> created all things, “everything  
16 God had made was very good, and was made for the profit and use” of human creatures.<sup>77</sup> The  
17 Presbyterian Study Catechism presents God's work of creation as an act of grace and blessing:

18 God's decision to create the world was an act of grace. In this decision God chose  
19 to grant existence to the world simply in order to bless it. God created the world  
20 to reveal God's glory, to share the love and freedom at the heart of God's triune  
21 being, and to give us eternal life in fellowship with God.<sup>78</sup>

22  
23 These gifts of creation and life extend to God's providential care. Thus we confess that God  
24 “still preserves my body and soul,” as well as “provides me with all the necessities of life, and  
25 preserves me from all danger,” and that God does this out of “divine goodness and mercy, with-  
26 out any merit or worthiness on my part.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Belgic Confession, Art. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 7, *Book of Confessions*, 5.032.

<sup>78</sup> Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 26.

<sup>79</sup> Evangelical Catechism, Q & A 16-18. <http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/evangelical-catechism.html> (August 6, 2010).  
See also Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 26.

1           Although these confessional affirmations of God’s goodness and life-giving power do not  
 2 explicitly mention the Supper, current Reformed liturgies for the Lord’s Supper highlight this  
 3 theme. In our liturgies, the broader context of offering typically appears in the Preface of the  
 4 Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. The gift of life and creation are identified at the very beginning:  
 5 “You have given us life and being...” (RCA); “We thank you for all the gifts of creation and the  
 6 gift of life itself” (UCC); and, “We bless you for your continual love and care for every creature.  
 7 We praise you for forming us in your image and calling us to be your people” (CRC).

8           Seeing creation and life itself as a gift offered by God provides the context, then, for see-  
 9 ing God’s work of salvation, including the saving work of Christ, all of which is symbolized and  
 10 offered in the Lord’s Supper. This, in turn, becomes the basis for offering ourselves in thankful  
 11 service to God.

12 *God Offers the Gift of Hope and Renewal throughout Salvation History*

13           Reformed confessions present God not only as life-giver but also as redeemer who pro-  
 14 claims the good news of salvation “already in Paradise” as well as through the prophets, believ-  
 15 ers, and acts of redemption accomplished in ancient Israel.<sup>80</sup> Thus ancient Israel “had not only  
 16 external and earthly but also spiritual and heavenly promises in Christ.”<sup>81</sup> The PC(USA) Study  
 17 Catechism elaborates God’s redemptive work in and through Israel:

18           God made a covenant with Israel, promising that God would be their light and  
 19 their salvation, that they would be God's people, and that through them all the  
 20 peoples of the earth would be blessed. Therefore, no matter how often Israel  
 21 turned away from God, God still cared for them and acted on their behalf. In par-  
 22 ticular, God sent them prophets, priests and kings. Each of these was “anointed”  
 23 by God's Spirit—prophets, to declare God's word; priests, to make sacrifice for  
 24 the people's sins; and kings, to rule justly in the fear of God, upholding the poor  
 25 and needy, and defending the people from their enemies.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 19.

<sup>81</sup> Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 13, *Book of Confessions*, 5.088.

<sup>82</sup> Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 36.

1 God's promises were "repeated and made clearer from time to time" as well as "embraced with  
2 joy" and "received by all the faithful" prior to the appearance of Jesus Christ.<sup>83</sup>

3 Current Reformed Lord's Supper liturgies lift up this ongoing work of God's salvation in  
4 words of thanksgiving: "We thank you that you did not abandon us in our rebellion against your  
5 love, but sent prophets and teachers to lead us into the way of salvation" (CRC); "We offer you  
6 praise for women and men of faith in every age who stand as witnesses to your love and justice"  
7 (UCC); and "When we rebelled against you refusing to trust and obey you, you sent us prophets  
8 to call us back to your way" (PC(USA)). In the Lord's Supper, we recognize that as we receive  
9 God's gifts of grace in Christ today, we stand among that great cloud of witnesses with whom  
10 God has continually renewed covenant and hope.

11 *Christ Offers a Sacrifice in Taking our Nature, Living, Dying, and Being Raised on behalf of*  
12 *God's People*

13 As we saw in our discussion of *anamnesis* above, contemporary Reformed liturgies evi-  
14 dence a broad understanding of the nature of Christ's sacrifice and self-offering. Historically,  
15 our Supper liturgies and sacramental theology focused on Christ's sacrificial death. We have  
16 begun to recover a fuller sense of the breadth of Christ's work expressed in our confessions so  
17 that both our sacramental theology and practice now apprehend the offering of Christ within the  
18 broad picture of God's redemptive work. Thus the Presbyterian Study Catechism affirms:

19 Despite our turning from God, God did not turn from us, but instead sent Jesus  
20 Christ in the fullness of time to restore our broken humanity. Jesus lived com-  
21 pletely for God, by giving himself completely for us, even to the point of dying  
22 for us. By living so completely for others, he manifested what he was—the per-

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<sup>83</sup> Scots Confession, Chap. 4, *Book of Confessions*, 3.04.



1           fect image of God. When by grace we are conformed to him through faith, our  
2 |           humanity is renewed according to the divine image that we lost.<sup>84</sup>  
3

4 This broader view is also seen in our widespread confessional emphasis on Christ’s threefold of-  
5 fice as prophet, priest, and king.<sup>85</sup> Even when the confessions highlight Jesus’ sacrificial  
6 death—his priestly work—they do not ignore the significance of Christ’s incarnation, life, resur-  
7 rection, and ascension.

8           Reformed confessions do emphasize Christ as God’s offering or sacrifice for the purpose  
9 of reconciling the world to God. The Belgic Confession says that God “poured out his goodness  
10 and mercy on us, who are guilty and worthy of damnation, giving to us his Son to die, by a most  
11 perfect love, and raising him to life for our justification, in order that by him we might have im-  
12 mortality and eternal life.”<sup>86</sup> Similarly, the Westminster Shorter Catechism says that “Christ  
13 executeth the office of a priest in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine jus-  
14 tice, and reconcile us to God.”<sup>87</sup> The Presbyterian Study Catechism ties Christ’s priestly, sacrifi-  
15 cial work to his larger self-offering and to the benefits he offers us: “He was the Lamb of God  
16 that took away the sin of the world; he became our priest and sacrifice in one. Confronted by our  
17 hopelessness in sin and death, Christ interceded by offering himself—his entire person and  
18 work—in order to reconcile us to God.”<sup>88</sup>

19           Our current Reformed liturgies for the Supper also present Christ’s sacrificial death with-  
20 in God’s broader work of forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ’s sacrificial death is not lifted  
21 up as the only or even the most significant moment in God’s redemptive act through Christ. One

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<sup>84</sup> Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 21.

<sup>85</sup> See Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 31; Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q & A 24-26, *Book of Confessions*, 7.024-026; Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 43-45, *Book of Confessions*, 7.153-155; Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 39-41.

<sup>86</sup> Belgic Confession, Article 20.

<sup>87</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q & A 25, *Book of Confessions*, 7.025.

<sup>88</sup> Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 40.

1 specific example, the liturgy for the Lord's Supper developed for shared use among the "Formu-  
 2 la of Agreement" churches, illustrates this broader reality: "We gratefully recall and remember  
 3 the wonder of Jesus' incarnation...his bearing of the cross with its death, and his rising from the  
 4 tomb by the power of God..."<sup>89</sup>

5 All communions name the gift of Christ's death on the cross as central to our celebration  
 6 of the Lord's Supper, but not as the sole dimension of Christ's offering. The CRC's liturgy for  
 7 the Supper places a greater emphasis on the atoning/forgiving aspect of Christ's sacrifice than do  
 8 the liturgies of the other Reformed communions. The words of the memorial declare "that [the  
 9 Lord Jesus] took upon himself our flesh and blood, and bore the wrath of God against our sin.  
 10 We confess that he was condemned to die that we might be pardoned, and suffered death that we  
 11 might live." During the distribution, the CRC liturgy explicitly points to forgiveness as a primary  
 12 effect of partaking, reminding the congregation that Christ's precious body and blood were given  
 13 "for the complete forgiveness of all our sins." We also note across our Reformed communions an  
 14 increased emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ and its atoning work in the Church's penitential  
 15 seasons.<sup>90</sup> But more generally, at the Lord's Table the assembly remembers the fullness of  
 16 God's saving activity, including God's action in the incarnation, life, sacrificial death, resurrec-  
 17 tion, and ascension of Christ.

18 *In the Meal of the Lord's Supper, Christ Offers and We Receive Both Christ and Christ's Bene-*  
 19 *fits of Forgiveness, Renewal, Reconciliation, Unity, Communion, Victory over Death, Eternal*  
 20 *Life, and Love*

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<sup>89</sup> The Formula of Agreement Liturgy [for Eucharist] in *Guidelines and Worship Resources for the Celebration of Full Communion* (1998). <http://images.rca.org/docs/worship/Liturgy-FormulaOfAgreement.pdf> (August 13, 2010).

<sup>90</sup> For example, options for the "Great Thanksgiving," such as in the CRC Holy Week preface before the *Sanctus*: "We give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord, who became the paschal Lamb that was sacrificed for our salvation." This also appears in the PC(USA)'s post-*Sanctus* thanksgiving for Christ at Maundy Thursday: "The cup of suffering which he drank has become for us the cup of salvation," and the UCC preface for Lent, "Because you have come in Jesus Christ, enduring the cross so that we might know eternal life."

1           Reformed confessions see the Lord’s Supper as offering Christ and his benefits. Eating  
2 the bread and drinking the wine “in accordance with Christ’s appointment” means partaking in  
3 Christ and receiving “from the risen Lord the benefits of his death and resurrection.”<sup>91</sup> As the  
4 Evangelical Catechism states, in this sacramental meal “we receive the body and blood of our  
5 Lord Jesus Christ as the nourishment of our new life, strengthen the fellowship with Christ and  
6 all believers, and confess that he has died for us.”<sup>92</sup> The chief gift given in the Supper is deeper  
7 union and communion with Christ, who with himself gives us all the benefits of his life, death,  
8 resurrection, and ascension: new life, forgiveness and reconciliation, communion with neighbor,  
9 unity as the Body of Christ, and the love of God in Christ Jesus from which nothing can separate  
10 us. Our Reformed liturgies evidence differing emphases in naming what is received in the Sup-  
11 per, but each focuses on our participation in Christ and his benefits. These are received as both  
12 gift and call.

13           The Supper not only communicates these gifts to recipients but also offers a multi-  
14 sensory confirmation of these very gifts. Thus, “as surely as” we see the bread of the Lord bro-  
15 ken for us and the cup given to us, “so surely his body was offered and broken for me and his  
16 blood poured out for me on the cross.” Moreover, “as surely as” we receive the elements and  
17 taste them, “so surely he nourishes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-  
18 out blood.”<sup>93</sup> We receive not just physical nourishment, but Christ our Savior: “Just as truly as  
19 we take and hold the sacraments in our hands and eat and drink it in our mouths, by which our  
20 life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and

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<sup>91</sup> Confession of 1967, II.B.4, *Book of Confessions*, 9.52.

<sup>92</sup> Evangelical Catechism, Q & A 125.

<sup>93</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 75, 79.

1 true blood of Christ, our only Savior. We receive these by faith, which is the hand and mouth of  
 2 our souls.”<sup>94</sup>

3 *In the Meal of the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Spirit Is Offered, or Poured Out, So That the Bread*  
 4 *and Wine Are for Us the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ*

5 As has been amply demonstrated above, both our Reformed confessions and liturgies  
 6 emphasize the Spirit’s role in the meal, making us sharers in Christ. After saying that Christ  
 7 wants to teach us that the meal nourishes our souls for eternal life, the Heidelberg Catechism  
 8 says, “But more important, he [Christ] wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that  
 9 we, through the Holy Spirit’s work, share in his true body.”<sup>95</sup> Christ and the Spirit are deeply  
 10 connected in the meal: “When we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, the Lord Jesus Christ is truly pre-  
 11 sent, pouring out his Spirit upon us. By his Spirit, the bread that we break and the cup that we  
 12 bless share in our Lord’s own body and blood.”<sup>96</sup> As a repeatable sacrament, “...the Lord’s  
 13 Supper indicates that as we turn unfilled to him again and again, our Lord continually meets us in  
 14 the power of the Holy Spirit to renew and deepen our faith.”<sup>97</sup>

15 In our discussion of the *epiclesis* we described the Church’s prayer for the work of the  
 16 Holy Spirit as “the last rhapsodic movement of the prayer of thanksgiving.” In offering this  
 17 prayer, the Church expresses its thanksgiving and its longing “for God to act by the Spirit to ef-  
 18 fect the promise of the sacrament and the sacrament’s benefits for those who partake in faith.”<sup>98</sup>  
 19 We acknowledge God’s freedom in response to our bidding, but trust that God will grant the  
 20 outpouring of the Spirit so that the simple gifts of bread and wine may be to us the communion  
 21 of the body and blood of Christ.

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<sup>94</sup> Belgic Confession, Art. 35.

<sup>95</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 79.

<sup>96</sup> Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 78.

<sup>97</sup> Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 70.

<sup>98</sup> See p. 19 above.

1 *We Offer Ourselves as Living Sacrifices of Thanksgiving—in the Lord’s Supper and in All of*  
 2 *Life—in Acts of Love and Justice. We Become the Body of Christ in the World*

3           Reformed confessions echo Romans 12 in saying that we offer ourselves as living sacri-  
 4 fices in response to God’s grace in Christ. Thus, the Heidelberg Catechism says that through  
 5 Christ’s death our old selves are put to death “so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer  
 6 rule us, but that instead we may dedicate ourselves as an offering of gratitude to him.”<sup>99</sup> The  
 7 Catechism adds that, as members of Christ by faith, believers share in his anointing and are  
 8 themselves anointed “to present [themselves] to him as a living sacrifice of thanks.”<sup>100</sup> The  
 9 Evangelical Catechism concludes its section on the Lord’s Supper by noting that our communion  
 10 with Christ requires us to “have no pleasure in sin, but earnestly flee and avoid it,” so that we  
 11 may “cheerfully and confidently say, ‘Lord Jesus, for thee I live, for thee I suffer, for thee I die!  
 12 Lord Jesus, thine will I be in life and death!’”<sup>101</sup>

13           While some Reformed Communion liturgies explicitly mention the “sacrifice” of Christ  
 14 and some do not,<sup>102</sup> all mention the sacrifice or offering of God’s people. Such words are found  
 15 in the *epiclesis*, oblation, or dedication in the various liturgies: “We offer ourselves to you as  
 16 holy and living sacrifices” (RCA); “With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you to be a  
 17 living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service” (PC(USA)); “We present to you our very  
 18 lives, committed to your service in behalf of all people” (UCC); and, “We present ourselves a  
 19 living sacrifice and come to the table” (CRC).

20           The offering of the people of God, so explicit in the oblation, is intimated in the begin-  
 21 ning of many of our liturgies for the Supper through the presentation of our tithes and offerings  
 22 along with bread and wine, as well as in the people’s response to the invitation to “Lift up your

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<sup>99</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 43.

<sup>100</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 32.

<sup>101</sup> Evangelical Catechism, Q & A 128.

<sup>102</sup> The RCA and CRC liturgies do; the UCC, PC(USA), and “Formula of Agreement” liturgies do not.

1 hearts,” with the words, “We lift them to God.”<sup>103</sup> Several of our Reformed Supper liturgies  
 2 make explicit provision for God’s people to carry forward the bread and the wine during the  
 3 Lord’s Supper ceremony. Some Reformed Christians see this as theologically confusing, sug-  
 4 gesting perhaps that we first give or offer something to God before God offers us the sacrament  
 5 of the Lord’s Supper and thus undermine the priority of God’s action in the Supper. Other Re-  
 6 formed Christians, however, consider it to be appropriate that God’s people carry forward the  
 7 bread and the wine, enacting the theology of the twentieth-century RCA confession, “Our Song  
 8 of Hope” which says, “Jesus takes up our bread and wine to represent his sacrifice, to bind his  
 9 ministry to our daily work, to unite us in his righteousness.”<sup>104</sup> However, in the case of either  
 10 practice,<sup>105</sup> all of our communions give absolute priority to God’s initiative in the multi-  
 11 dimensioned offerings remembered and made in the Lord’s Supper, and share the conviction that  
 12 we are called to offer ourselves to God in a response of thanksgiving and daily service to the glo-  
 13 ry of God.

#### 14 **Discipleship**

15 The Reformed understanding of discipleship is grounded in our theology of grace: our  
 16 active service is a response to the unmerited divine favor that has been extended to us in Jesus  
 17 Christ. This pattern of action-as-response to the gracious action of God is set forth clearly in the

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<sup>103</sup> The liturgies of the UCC, RCA, and PC(USA) include specific rubrics for the congregation’s offering of moneys along with the elements of bread and wine.

<sup>104</sup> Our Song of Hope, VI.19. <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=313> (December 3, 2008).

<sup>105</sup> Both sides ground their views in Scripture, noting that the Lord’s Supper echoes several biblical accounts of Jesus providing food and drink to many (e.g., the feeding of the multitudes, the wedding at Cana, the resurrected Christ feeding his disciples on the shore). In support of the first view, one can observe that Jesus often shared his meal with tax collectors and sinners, who came to the table with nothing. And when the meal included fish that the disciples had caught, Jesus had provided the fish by telling them where to cast their nets (John 21:1-14). In support of the second view, one can observe that on several occasions people provided ordinary food or drink (loaves and fish, water) that Jesus used to nourish large numbers of people (John 2:1-11, John 6:5-14). Even in this second view, it is worth observing that what people provided was not adequate for the need at hand. The loaves and fish were not sufficient to feed the crowd, and the water was not what was needed at a wedding banquet when the wine had been consumed. Still, Jesus used these inadequate “gifts” and in return gave something far greater than what was offered to him. So too, we receive gifts from Christ that are far greater than any humble, ordinary gifts we offer in worship.

1 opening words of the Heidelberg Catechism. The believer’s “only comfort in life and in death” is  
 2 “that I am not my own, but belong . . . to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ”; and this has been  
 3 made possible by Christ, who “by the Holy Spirit” not only “has set me free from the tyranny of  
 4 the devil,” but also “assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready  
 5 from now on to live for him.”<sup>106</sup> The insistence on active response to God’s grace is repeated  
 6 elsewhere in the Catechism, where belonging to the One who is prophet, priest, and king<sup>107</sup>  
 7 means that the believer is obligated “to confess his name, to present myself to him as a living  
 8 sacrifice of thanks, [and] to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil.”<sup>108</sup>

9         The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a crucial context for reinforcing and nurturing this  
 10 action-as-response. Furthermore, in Reformed sacramental theology, the faithful response that  
 11 flows from participation at the Lord’s Table has to do not only with our belonging to Christ, but  
 12 also with our belonging to all others who are members of his body. We recall here that the his-  
 13 toric Reformed confessions are clear that the Supper is, among other things, for the strengthening  
 14 of the participants’ ongoing engagement in “all duties which they owe unto him,” including  
 15 those duties that they owe to “each other, as members of his mystical body.”<sup>109</sup>

16         The Reformed conception of the formation that takes place in the Supper, then, has al-  
 17 ways made much of the way of life that must flow from our communion with  
 18 Christ: a pattern of living that takes with utmost seriousness the ways in which union with Christ  
 19 cannot be divorced from union with all who belong to his Body. Expressing these themes, the  
 20 PC(USA)’s *Directory of Worship* offers this instruction for the prayer of invocation at the Table:  
 21 on behalf of the congregation, the presider asks the triune God “to unite them in communion

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<sup>106</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 1.

<sup>107</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 31.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Westminster Confession, Chap. 31/29.1, *Book of Confessions*, 6.161.

1 with all the faithful in heaven and on earth” and “to keep them faithful as Christ’s body, repre-  
2 senting Christ and doing God’s work in the world.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, the Lord’s Supper is a joining to-  
3 gether with the Church universal—fellow Christians “in heaven and on earth”—in a way that  
4 creates a sense of solidarity with those who have suffered for the faith in the past, and with those  
5 in the Church on earth who are victims of a various forms of oppression. Our fully conscious  
6 participation in this universal, unifying Supper, given by Christ, ought to provide sufficient mo-  
7 tivation for “representing Christ and doing God’s work in the world.”

8         These same themes recur in the various Great Prayers of Thanksgiving in our Reformed  
9 liturgies. Through our sharing in the Lord’s Table, the Spirit “enables us to remain faithful in  
10 hope and love” (CRC); the Spirit “unites us in ministry and sends us out to be the Body of Christ  
11 in the world” (PC(USA)); and, through the sacrament we are empowered to be “salt and light  
12 and leaven for the furtherance of God’s will” (UCC).

13         Properly understood, formation for discipleship is integral to all stages in the drama that  
14 occurs at the Table. Not only is Christ offered to us in the sacrament, but, as was illustrated in  
15 our discussion of “offering,” the gathered participants in turn offer themselves to Christ. The  
16 strong emphasis in John Calvin’s own theology on union with Christ is reaffirmed as a basis for  
17 discipleship in the *epiclesis*: We pray for the Spirit to descend upon us so “that we may grow up  
18 in all things into Christ our Lord” (RCA).

19         In all of this, the basic pattern is the same. The believer, by God’s sovereign grace, comes  
20 to belong to Christ. This in turn incorporates the believer into communion, not only with Christ  
21 but also with all who belong to Christ. The Lord’s Supper nurtures and empowers this rich sense  
22 of communion with Christ and his whole Church, thus obligating us to move into the world as  
23 instruments of what we have heard and seen and tasted at the Table. That this goes beyond a

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<sup>110</sup> PC(USA), *Directory for Worship*, W-2.4005.



1 mere “private” struggle against sin is made clear by John Calvin’s insistence regarding the prop-  
 2 er effects of participation in the Supper:

3 We shall very much benefit from this sacrament if this thought is impressed and engraved  
 4 on our minds: that none of the brethren [or sisters] can be injured, despised, rejected,  
 5 abused, or in any way offended by us, without at the same time injuring despising, and  
 6 abusing Christ by the wrongs we do.... we cannot love Christ without loving him in the  
 7 brethren.<sup>111</sup>  
 8

9 While the call to discipleship is present, then, in the early Reformed confessions, liturgies,  
 10 and theological writings, in the twentieth century a series of new Reformed confessional state-  
 11 ments were produced, expanding the call to discipleship in relation to new social and cultural  
 12 realities. This updating has expanded our understanding of the task of the believing community,  
 13 and while the emphasis remains on our need to be nurtured sacramentally for service to Christ  
 14 and all who belong to his Body, there is also recognition of the need to serve neighbors of other  
 15 faiths, as well as those who claim to have no faith.

16 In struggling with new manifestations of injustice and oppression in our world, Reformed  
 17 Christians have in recent years given new emphasis to the eschatological character of the Lord’s  
 18 Supper as an anticipation of the ancient promise that the day is surely coming when “the Lord of  
 19 hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food. . . . And he will destroy on this mountain the  
 20 shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations” (Isaiah 25:6-7). In  
 21 the light of this promise, even now we can “rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom which he will  
 22 bring to consummation at his promised coming, and go out from the Lord’s Table with courage  
 23 and hope for the service to which he has called them,”<sup>112</sup> and with assurance that “Christ is pre-  
 24 sent in His world proclaiming salvation until He comes, a symbol of hope for a troubled age.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.38.

<sup>112</sup> Confession of 1967, II.B.4, *Book of Confessions*, 9.52.

<sup>113</sup> Our Song of Hope, VI.19.



1           The Introductory Rites gather the members of the Body around the priest as the visible  
2 presence of Christ the Head of the Body. In this gathering the Church is made visible, Christ’s  
3 true presence within the community is proclaimed, and those gathering are called to surrender  
4 themselves to God’s transformative action as they prepare to enter into the mystery of Christ’s  
5 death and resurrection that is being celebrated.

6           The Liturgy of the Word proclaims God’s mighty deeds on behalf of believers, but espe-  
7 cially in the reading and preaching of the gospel, Christ becomes present to the community of  
8 believers—teaching them, challenging them, and urging them to fidelity as disciples of Christ.

9           In the Liturgy of the Eucharist we so completely unite ourselves with the saving work of  
10 Christ that we place ourselves on the altar, are transformed and renewed, and are invited to ap-  
11 proach the messianic banquet table to be nourished by a gracious, lavishly generous God.

12           The Concluding Rites send us forth with a divine blessing to live what we have remem-  
13 bered and celebrated. Thus the Mass ends, but the Eucharist is a reality also to be lived every  
14 day by the community of believers.<sup>117</sup>

### 15 ***Epiclesis*—Action of the Holy Spirit**

16 While the Roman Canon (revised as the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Prayer I) has no explicit  
17 *epiclesis* over the gifts (one can argue that it is implied), most other eucharistic prayers<sup>118</sup> in use  
18 in the United States have both an *epiclesis* over the gifts (before the institution narrative) and an

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<sup>117</sup> See the section “The movement of the celebration” in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2d ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 1348-1355 ( hereafter *CCC*).

<sup>118</sup> The one exception is the Eucharistic Prayer for Children III which has no explicit *epiclesis* over the gifts (the prayer asks the Father to “bless these gifts of bread and wine and make them holy”). Nor is there an explicit *epiclesis* over the people; without mentioning the Holy Spirit, the prayer for the people asks that we “be filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit” rather than ask for our unity, as do the *epicleses* in the other eucharistic prayers (1975/85 text).

1 *epiclesis* over the people (after the institution narrative).<sup>119</sup> In Eucharistic Prayer II, for example,  
 2 this is expressed as follows:

3 Before the institution narrative:

4 Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray,  
 5 *by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,*  
 6 so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

7  
 8 After the institution narrative:

9 Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ,  
 10 *we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.*<sup>120</sup>

11  
 12 To give another example, before the institution narrative Eucharistic Prayer III states, “There-  
 13 fore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: *by the same Spirit* gracious make holy these gifts we have  
 14 brought to you for consecration, *that they may become the Body and Blood* of your Son our Lord  
 15 Jesus Christ.”<sup>121</sup> After the institution narrative it adds, “grant that we, who are nourished by the  
 16 Body and Blood of your Son *and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body*, one spirit in  
 17 Christ.”<sup>122</sup> This restoration of the *epiclesis* in the revised eucharistic liturgy points to its signifi-  
 18 cance as an action of the Holy Spirit in changing the elements and transforming the community.  
 19 It also makes clearer the trinitarian action of the whole eucharistic rite. The *Catechism of the*  
 20 *Catholic Church* speaks of a fourfold action of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments: first, the Holy  
 21 Spirit “prepares the Church to encounter her Lord.”<sup>123</sup> The Spirit “gathers the children of God  
 22 into the one Body of Christ,” and the grace of the Spirit “seeks to awaken faith, conversion of  
 23 heart, and adherence to the Father’s will.”<sup>124</sup>

24 Second, “The Holy Spirit... recalls and makes Christ manifest to the faith of the assem-

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<sup>119</sup> Because the two *epicleses* are divided by the institution narrative, they are called a “split” *epiclesis*.

<sup>120</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>121</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>122</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>123</sup> CCC, 1092.

<sup>124</sup> CCC, 1097-98.

1 bly.”<sup>125</sup> The *Catechism* goes on to say that “primarily in the Eucharist, and by analogy in the oth-  
 2 er sacraments, the liturgy is the *memorial* of the mystery of salvation. The Holy Spirit is the  
 3 Church’s living memory.”<sup>126</sup> Thus the *Catechism* makes a connection between the Holy Spirit  
 4 and *anamnesis*. Specifically,

5 in the Liturgy of the Word the Holy Spirit “recalls” to the assembly all that Christ has  
 6 done for us. In keeping with the nature of liturgical actions and the ritual traditions of the  
 7 churches, the celebration “makes a remembrance” of the marvelous works of God in an  
 8 *anamnesis* which may be more or less developed. The Holy Spirit who thus awakens the  
 9 memory of the Church then inspires thanksgiving and praise (*doxology*).<sup>127</sup>

10  
 11 What is critical here is that the act of “remembering” (*anamnesis*) is not the same as “recalling.”  
 12 It is in the remembering that the past act is made present in the here and now by the Holy Spirit.

13 Third, the Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ. In the Eucharist, this happens  
 14 (is effected) not only in the act of remembering (*anamnesis*) but also in the *epiclesis*: “The *Epi-*  
 15 *clesis* (‘invocation upon’) is the intercession in which the priest begs the Father to send the Holy  
 16 Spirit, the Sanctifier, so that the offerings may become the body and blood of Christ and that the  
 17 faithful, by receiving them, may themselves become a living offering to God.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> CCC, 1092.

<sup>126</sup> CCC, 1099.

<sup>127</sup> CCC, 1103.

<sup>128</sup> CCC, 1105. And in no. 1353: “In the *epiclesis*, the Church asks the Father to send his Holy Spirit (or the power of his blessing) on the bread and wine, so that by his power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit (some liturgical traditions put the *epiclesis* after the *anamnesis*). In the *institution narrative*, the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine Christ's body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all.”

Historically, there has been a difference in emphasis between the Western and Eastern churches with respect to consecration. The Eastern Church has emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit and, consequently, has a stronger emphasis on the *epiclesis*, locating the change in the elements at the *epiclesis*. The Western Church, in contrast, has had only an implied *epiclesis* up until the newly composed eucharistic prayers approved after Vatican II. For it, the emphasis has been more strongly on the *verba* (“This is my body. . . . This is my blood.”), locating transubstantiation of the elements here. Presently, in the Latin Church, both the *epiclesis* and *verba* are appreciated to be one prayer.

1 Fourth, the Holy Spirit brings us into communion with Christ. “In every liturgical action  
 2 the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his  
 3 Body.”<sup>129</sup> The fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work in the liturgy is our communion with the Trinity  
 4 and with each other. In the Eucharist, the *epiclesis* is “a prayer for the full effect of the assem-  
 5 bly’s communion with the mystery of Christ.” Indeed, in almost all cases the *epiclesis* over the  
 6 people is to bring the community into unity with each other and God. Even when unity is not  
 7 explicitly mentioned, joy is the dominant effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit.<sup>130</sup> The Holy  
 8 Spirit makes us a living sacrifice to God by our “spiritual transformation into the image of  
 9 Christ, by concern for the Church’s unity, and by taking part in her mission through the witness  
 10 and service of charity.”<sup>131</sup> So the Holy Spirit is also the ground for connecting Eucharist and dis-  
 11 cipleship.

12 One point that the *Catechism* highlights throughout its treatment of the Eucharist is that  
 13 the Spirit works *with* us, in a sense that takes seriously human cooperation with grace: “When  
 14 the Spirit encounters in us the response of faith which he has aroused in us, he brings about  
 15 genuine cooperation. Through it, the liturgy becomes the common work of the Holy Spirit and  
 16 the Church.”<sup>132</sup>

### 17 ***Anamnesis*—Remembering**

18 The ritual *anamnesis* (to remember, to make memorial) is an element that follows the in-  
 19 stitution narrative in all ten of the U.S. eucharistic prayers. In the *anamnesis* “the Church calls to  
 20 mind the Passion, resurrection, and glorious return of Christ Jesus; she presents to the Father the

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<sup>129</sup> CCC, 1108.

<sup>130</sup> See note 118.

<sup>131</sup> CCC, 1109.

<sup>132</sup> CCC, 1091. See also 1099: “The Spirit and the Church *cooperate* to manifest Christ and his work of salvation in the liturgy” (emphasis added).

1 offering of his Son which reconciles us with him.”<sup>133</sup> An example would be the *anamnesis* in

2 Eucharistic Prayer III:

3           Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate *the memorial* of the saving Passion of your Son,  
4           his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward  
5 |           to his second coming, we offer you . . .<sup>134</sup>

6  
7           The *anamnesis*, therefore, makes explicit that what the Christian community is doing in  
8 the eucharistic liturgy is placing itself within the dynamic rhythm of the whole paschal mystery  
9 of Christ: his life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Spirit, and the promise  
10 of his return. It is important to keep in mind here the connection between *anamnesis* and the Ho-  
11 ly Spirit that we noted earlier, for it is through the power of the Spirit, who is “the church’s liv-  
12 ing memory,” that the mystery of Christ is made present in the Eucharist.<sup>135</sup>

13           The *Catechism* begins its section on the sacramental sacrifice by recalling Jesus’ words

14 “Do this in remembrance of me.”

15           We carry out this command of the Lord by celebrating the *memorial of his sacrifice*. In so  
16 doing, *we offer to the Father* what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread  
17 and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become  
18 the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made *present*.<sup>136</sup>

19  
20 Thus Catholic doctrine sees the teachings on *anamnesis*, sacrifice, and the real presence of Christ  
21 as intimately connected.

22           The notion of “remembering,” which has its origin in the Hebrew word *zkr*, is not the  
23 mere recalling of a past event, but a celebration of God’s action in the present. As the *Catechism*  
24 notes,

25           In the sense of Sacred Scripture the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events  
26 but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical cele-  
27 bration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel

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<sup>133</sup> CCC, 1354.

| <sup>134</sup> *Roman Missal* (2010), Eucharistic Prayer III, (emphasis added).

<sup>135</sup> CCC, 1099.

<sup>136</sup> CCC, 1357.

1 understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus  
2 events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives  
3 to them.

4  
5 In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates  
6 the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and . . . the sacrifice Christ offered  
7 once for all on the cross remains ever present.<sup>137</sup>

## 9 **Presence of Christ**

10  
11 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* speaks of multiple presences of Christ in the Eucharist:

12 He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, “the same  
13 now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,”  
14 *and most of all in the eucharistic species*. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so  
15 that when anybody baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present in his  
16 word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the church.  
17 Lastly, he is present when the church prays and sings, for he has promised: “Where two  
18 or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt.  
19 18:20).<sup>138</sup>

20 The liturgical texts support the Constitution’s assertion of Christ’s personal presence in the eu-  
21 charistic celebration. For example, with respect to the liturgy constitution’s assertion that Christ  
22 is present in the very proclamation of the word, the assembly’s acclamatory response before and  
23 after the gospel uses second person, direct address pronouns: “Glory to *you*, O Lord” and  
24 “Praise to *you*, Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>139</sup>

25 The *Catechism* repeats the constitution’s language of Jesus being especially present under  
26 the eucharistic species. It describes the manner of Christ’s presence as follows:

27 The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eu-  
28 charist above all the sacraments as “the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to  
29 which all the sacraments tend.” In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist “the body

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<sup>137</sup> CCC, 1363-64. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David N. Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 5:669) describes the act of remembrance in the Lord’s Supper as follows: “When believers gathered around this table, they remembered the past, to be sure; they remembered the stories of the suffering and death of the risen Lord—but not merely as a historical recollection. In remembering that past, they owned the stories as their stories (including the story of Peter’s “remembering,” Mark 14:72). This remembering involved a “pleading guilty” to the death of Jesus but also a sharing in that death and in the new covenant (with its forgiveness) which Christ established. *This remembering was constitutive of identity and community and determined conduct in the present*” (emphasis added).

<sup>138</sup> No. 7 in *Vatican Council II*, 121.

<sup>139</sup> Emphasis added.



1 and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the*  
 2 *whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*” “This presence is called ‘re-  
 3 al’—by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not  
 4 be ‘real’ too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substan-*  
 5 *tial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely pre-  
 6 sent.”<sup>140</sup>

7  
 8 The *Catechism* then goes on to repeat the teaching of the Council of Trent, which affirms the  
 9 doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>141</sup> The eucharistic presence of Christ “begins at the moment of the  
 10 consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist.”<sup>142</sup>

11 The real and substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharist confirms the efficacy of the  
 12 *epiclesis* (the invocation of the Holy Spirit), for it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the  
 13 bread and wine are truly transformed into his risen body and blood. Moreover, it is the real and  
 14 substantial presence of the risen Christ that makes the *anamnesis* (the remembering) a true re-  
 15 presentation (the making present) of the living salvific mysteries and not merely the recollection  
 16 of a past event. Because Christ, the great High Priest, is substantially present, the faithful, in  
 17 joining themselves to him, are also united to his once-and-for-all sacrifice and so acquire its ev-  
 18 erlasting saving benefits, the forgiveness of sins and the risen life of the Holy Spirit. Finally, be-  
 19 cause the risen Christ is substantially present in the Eucharist, the faithful, in receiving him, are  
 20 truly conformed into his own risen likeness, and so are able to live more fully their call to disci-  
 21 pleship.

22 It is important to note that the understanding of transubstantiation embraces notions of  
 23 symbol and eschatological anticipation but cannot be reduced to them. Pope Paul VI was con-

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<sup>140</sup> CCC, 1374.

<sup>141</sup> CCC, 1376 states: “The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: ‘Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.’”

<sup>142</sup> CCC, 1377.

1 cerned to correct such misunderstandings in his 1965 encyclical *Mysterium fidei* where he also  
 2 addressed the sacramental nature of Christ's physical or bodily presence in the sacrament.

3 To avoid any misunderstanding of this type of presence, which goes beyond the laws of  
 4 nature and constitutes the greatest miracle of its kind, we have to listen with docility to  
 5 the voice of the teaching and praying Church. Her voice, which constantly echoes the  
 6 voice of Christ, assures us that the way in which Christ becomes present in this Sacra-  
 7 ment is through the conversion of the whole substance of the bread into His body and of  
 8 the whole substance of the wine into His blood, a unique and truly wonderful conversion  
 9 that the Catholic Church fittingly and properly calls transubstantiation. As a result of  
 10 transubstantiation, the species of bread and wine undoubtedly take on a new signification  
 11 and a new finality, for they are no longer ordinary bread and wine but instead a sign of  
 12 something sacred and a sign of spiritual food; but they take on this new signification, this  
 13 new finality, precisely because they contain a new "reality" which we can rightly call on-  
 14 tological. For what now lies beneath the aforementioned species is not what was there be-  
 15 fore, but something completely different; and not just in the estimation of Church belief  
 16 but in reality, since once the substance or nature of the bread and wine has been changed  
 17 into the body and blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and the wine except for  
 18 the species—beneath which Christ is present whole and entire in His physical "reality,"  
 19 corporeally present, although not in the manner in which bodies are in a place.<sup>143</sup>  
 20

21 This belief in the real and substantial presence of Christ in the eucharistic species has  
 22 several consequences for Catholic worship and devotion. First, "in the liturgy of the Mass we  
 23 express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among  
 24 other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord."<sup>144</sup> In addition, the  
 25 faithful adore and worship Jesus present in the Eucharist, "not only during Mass, but also outside  
 26 of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration  
 27 of the faithful, and carrying them in procession."<sup>145</sup>

28 The *Catechism* goes on to speak more specifically about adoration. It acknowledges that  
 29 the tabernacle (a decorated wood or metal receptacle that holds the reserved Sacrament) was  
 30 originally intended as a worthy repository for the Eucharist that would be given to the sick and

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<sup>143</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei*, no. 46. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_03091965\\_mysterium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_03091965_mysterium_en.html) (October 6, 2010).

<sup>144</sup> CCC, 1378.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

1 others who had to be absent from Mass. However, “as faith in the real presence of Christ in his  
2 Eucharist deepened, the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord  
3 present under the eucharistic species.”<sup>146</sup>

4         Indeed, eucharistic adoration has been a long tradition in the Catholic Church, resting in  
5 the belief that Christ’s presence in the bread and wine after they have become his body and blood  
6 is substantial and enduring. Moreover, gestures of adoration take place within the shape of the  
7 liturgy itself: at the genuflection of the priest (and the bow of the assembly if they are standing)  
8 after the elevations of the Host and Chalice; at the genuflection of the priest before he receives  
9 Communion; at the communicants’ bow before they receive (in the U.S.); in the prolonged peri-  
10 od of silence or communal song of praise at the conclusion of the Communion procession; and in  
11 the period of adoration at the Repository on Holy Thursday after the procession with the Eucha-  
12 rist. The adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is an extension of the adoration that begins in the  
13 Mass itself.

14         Although it does not develop the point at length, the *Catechism* recognizes that there is a  
15 sense in which “real presence” has to do not only with the eucharistic elements but also with  
16 those who receive it. The point is made most explicitly in the section on how the Eucharist  
17 “makes the Church”: “Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the  
18 Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body.” In  
19 this connection, the *Catechism* cites the sermon by St. Augustine that we quoted in the general  
20 “Introduction”

21         If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the  
22 table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you re-  
23 spond “Amen” (“yes, it is true!”) and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear

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<sup>146</sup> CCC, 1379.

1 the words, “the Body of Christ” and respond “Amen.” Be then a member of the Body of  
 2 Christ that your *Amen* may be true.<sup>147</sup>

3  
 4 In addition to its expression in the *Catechism*, this emphasis has also been operative in recent  
 5 Catholic theological reflection on the Eucharist and social justice.<sup>148</sup>

## 6 **Offering and Sacrifice**

7  
 8 Sacrifice language has been one of the historically divisive matters between our churches.

9 At issue is whether the sacrifice on the cross is repeated. Eucharistic Prayer I (a revision and  
 10 translation of the Roman Canon) helps us address this question. The prayer, after the institution  
 11 narrative, continues with these words after the *anamnesis*: “. . . we, your servants and your holy  
 12 people, offer to your glorious majesty from the gifts that you have given us, this pure victim, this  
 13 holy victim, this spotless victim, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting sal-  
 14 vation.” What is remembered and offered is the risen Christ substantially present in the Bread  
 15 and Wine, “a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim.”

16 Just as the celebration of Passover makes present the Exodus event to Jewish believers,  
 17 the Eucharist is Christ’s Passover in which “the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross  
 18 remains ever present” to the Christian community.<sup>149</sup> In this connection the *Catechism* quotes the  
 19 Second Vatican Council’s “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (*Lumen gentium*), no. 3: “As  
 20 often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which ‘Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed’ is celebrated  
 21 on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out.” The *Catechism* goes on to say:

22 Because it is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sac-  
 23 rificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: “This is  
 24 my body which is given for you” and “This cup which is poured out for you is the New

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<sup>147</sup> CCC, 1396; see page 8 above.

<sup>148</sup> It has been argued that this emphasis is found in the New Testament, e.g., in 1 Cor 11:17-32, where Paul speaks of eating the bread and drinking the cup in an unworthy manner. Thus the Corinthians may have *thought* that they were coming together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper (v. 20), but their behavior towards the poor precluded an authentic celebration of the Eucharist. See Jerome Murphy-O’Connor’s excellent analysis in “Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians (Part II),” *Worship* 51 (1977) 65-68.

<sup>149</sup> CCC, 1364.

1           Covenant in my blood.” In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up  
2           for us on the cross, the very blood which he “poured out for many for the forgiveness of  
3           sins.”<sup>150</sup>

4           It then makes two further points about the Eucharist as sacrifice. First, the sacrifice of Christ  
5           and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: Jesus, who offered himself on the  
6           cross, now offers himself through the ministry of the priest in an “unbloody” manner.<sup>151</sup> At the  
7           same time, the community is invited to unite itself to Christ’s sacrifice; thus the Eucharist is also  
8           a time for each individual to renew his or her own self-giving surrender to fidelity to God. Se-  
9           cond, the Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. “The Church which is the Body of Christ  
10          participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire.” This  
11          includes all of the members of Christ’s body, whose “praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are  
12          united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value.”<sup>152</sup>

13          Catholic doctrine has often spoken of the “propitiatory” nature of Jesus’ sacrifice, that is,  
14          that it expiates sin. The *Catechism* quotes the Council of Trent on this point: “Since in this divine  
15          sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody  
16          manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner . . . this sacri-  
17          fice is truly propitiatory.”<sup>153</sup> This notion, however, requires some expansion. Christ lovingly of-  
18          fered his holy and innocent life to the Father out of love for the whole of humankind. It is this  
19          loving offering that makes Jesus’ sacrifice an act of *propitiation* or expiation for sin. The whole  
20          sinful history of humankind is an affront to the goodness and love of the infinite God. Justice  
21          itself, and not the arbitrary demands of an angry God, demands that reparation be made to God  
22          for such an offense, so that human beings might be reconciled to God and be made holy once

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<sup>150</sup> CCC, 1365.

<sup>151</sup> CCC, 1367.

<sup>152</sup> CCC, 1368.

<sup>153</sup> CCC, 1367.

1 again. Jesus' loving sacrificial offering of his own holy and innocent life to the Father on behalf  
 2 of humankind made reparation for all the sinful (unloving) acts that were and are an affront to  
 3 the goodness and love of God, and thus human beings were reconciled to the Father and made  
 4 holy. Jesus' propitiatory sacrifice, then, does not quell the wrath of an angry God, but rather,  
 5 having met the demands of justice, makes it possible once more for those who come to faith in  
 6 Christ to become authentic sons and daughters of the Father. The Council of Trent expresses this  
 7 as follows:

8         And insasmuch as in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass is contained and  
 9         immolated in an unbloody manner the same Christ who once offered Himself in a bloody  
 10         manner on the altar of the cross, the holy council teaches that this is truly propitiatory and  
 11         has this effect, that we, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with  
 12         fear and reverence, draw nigh to God, *we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid.*  
 13         For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and par-  
 14         dons even the gravest crimes and sins.<sup>154</sup>

15  
 16 It is this one propitiatory sacrifice that is made present within the eucharistic celebration.

17         The *Catechism* summarizes that the Eucharist is a sacrifice for three reasons: “because it  
 18         *re-presents* (makes present, enacts) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its *memorial* and be-  
 19         cause it *applies* its fruit.”<sup>155</sup> The Eucharist makes present the one sacrifice of Christ so that all  
 20         believers, from every age, might be united to it, and so reap its salvific benefits, that is, for-  
 21         giveness of sins and reconciliation with the Father. As the Council of Trent states,

22         [Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his  
 23         death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But be-  
 24         cause his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper “on the night when  
 25         he was betrayed,” [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacri-  
 26         fice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to ac-  
 27         complish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until  
 28         the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we  
 29         commit.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H. J. Schroeder (Rockford, IL: Tan, 1978), 145-46 (“Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass,” Chap. 2 [Council of Trent, Session 22]).

<sup>155</sup> CCC, 1366.

<sup>156</sup> *Canons and Decrees*, 144 (“Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass,” Chap. 1., quoted in CCC, 1366.

1  
2 It is worth noting that the *Catechism* begins its teaching on sacrifice with what *Christ* of-  
3 fered, and relates all other meanings of sacrifice back to it. But this sacrifice of  
4 Christ also involves God the Father's offering of Jesus to the Church. This understanding is re-  
5 flected in the Catholic liturgical tradition, such as, for example, in the wording of Eucharistic  
6 Prayer IV:

7 Look O Lord, upon the Sacrifice which *you yourself have provided for your Church,*  
8 and grant in your loving kindness to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice  
9 that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit, they may truly become  
10 a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory.<sup>157</sup>

## 11 **Discipleship**

13 Every eucharistic celebration dynamically moves toward the concluding rites during  
14 which we are explicitly sent forth to live what we have celebrated. Indeed, two new formulae for  
15 dismissal written by Pope Benedict XVI and included in the 2010 third edition of the *Roman*  
16 *Missal* make our discipleship even stronger: "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord." and  
17 "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." But even earlier in the Mass there are indica-  
18 tions that we are challenged to live what we have celebrated as faithful disciples of the Lord. For  
19 example, the purpose of the homily is so that "the mysteries of the faith and the *guiding princi-*  
20 *ples of the Christian life* are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical  
21 year."<sup>158</sup> The two eucharistic prayers for reconciliation remind us of our responsibility to reach  
22 out to those whom we have hurt or those from whom we are alienated. In the Eucharistic Prayer  
23 for Masses for Various Needs and Occasion: I. The Church on the Way to Unity we pray that  
24 the Church manifests the covenant of the Father's love and until Christ comes again and we pray  
25 that we proclaim the work of God's love. In the same eucharistic prayer, IV. Jesus, the Compass-

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<sup>157</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>158</sup> No. 52, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in *Vatican Council II*.

1 sion of God we pray that the Lord open our eyes to the needs of all, inspire us to comfort through  
 2 our words and deeds those who labor and are burdened, and keep our service of others faithful to  
 3 the example and command of Christ.

4 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* clearly places the liturgy in the wider context of the Christian  
 5 life when it says:

6 11. But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that  
 7 the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their  
 8 voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain (see 2  
 9 Cor 6:1). Pastors of souls must, therefore, realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated,  
 10 their obligation goes further than simply ensuring that the laws governing valid and law-  
 11 ful celebration are observed. They must also ensure that the faithful take part fully aware  
 12 of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by it.

13 12. The spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. Chris-  
 14 tians are indeed called to pray with others, but they must also enter into their rooms to  
 15 pray to their Father, in secret (see Mt 6:6); furthermore, according to the teaching of the  
 16 apostle, he must pray without ceasing (see 1 Th 5:17). We also learn from the same apos-  
 17 tle that we must always carry around in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that the life too  
 18 of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh (see 2 Cor 4:10-11). That is why we  
 19 beg the Lord in the sacrifice of the Mass that, “receiving the offering of the spiritual vic-  
 20 tim,” he may fashion us for himself “as an eternal gift.”<sup>159</sup>

21  
 22 The *Catechism*, too, lists several “fruits of Holy Communion.” These connect the Eucharist to  
 23 Catholics’ overall life of faith and their relationship with the Church—Church understood in a  
 24 fairly broad sense. The first fruit of the Eucharist is that it “augments our union with Christ.”<sup>160</sup>  
 25 Holy Communion “preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.” It  
 26 provides spiritual nourishment just as material food provides bodily nourishment.<sup>161</sup> Second, the  
 27 Eucharist “separates us from sin.”<sup>162</sup> This includes wiping away venial sins and preserving us  
 28 from future mortal sins.<sup>163</sup> The *Catechism* explains the latter as follows: “The more we share the

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<sup>159</sup> *Vatican Council II*, 123.

<sup>160</sup> CCC, 1391.

<sup>161</sup> CCC, 1392.

<sup>162</sup> CCC, 1393.

<sup>163</sup> CCC defines venial sin as follows: “One commits *venial sin* when, in a less serious matter, he does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he disobeys the moral law in a grave matter, but without full



1 life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by  
 2 mortal sin.”<sup>164</sup> The third fruit is that the Eucharist “makes the Church. . . . Communion renews,  
 3 strengthens, and deepens [our] incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism.”<sup>165</sup>  
 4 Fourth, the Eucharist commits us to the poor: “To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ  
 5 given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren.”<sup>166</sup> Thus, the Eucharist  
 6 should commit us to social justice. The fifth and final fruit of the Eucharist is that it signifies the  
 7 unity of Christians. “The more painful the experience of the divisions in the Church which break  
 8 the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord  
 9 that the time of complete unity among all who believe in him may return.”<sup>167</sup> The Catechism’s  
 10 language clearly suggests that this fruit is only partially realized as long as our churches remain  
 11 divided.

12 The *Catechism* ends this section with several paragraphs on the Eucharist as a pledge of  
 13 eternal glory.<sup>168</sup> This point could just as well have been made under the rubric of fruits of the  
 14 Eucharist in that, like the fruit of unity, it signifies the “not yet” of the kingdom. Our discipleship  
 15 is always lived in the context of waiting in joyful hope for the coming of the Savior.

### 16 Section 3: Convergences and Divergences

17  
 18 In studying our theologies and liturgies of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, our Roman Cath-  
 19 olic and Reformed dialogue teams tried not only to understand each other better but also to iden-  
 20 tify areas of convergence and divergence on each of the five themes that together we explored.  
 21 In what follows, we specify these points of agreement as well as ways in which our understand-

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knowledge or without complete consent” (1862). “Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent” (1857).

<sup>164</sup> CCC, 1395. The forgiveness of mortal sin is proper to the Sacrament of Penance.

<sup>165</sup> CCC, 1396.

<sup>166</sup> CCC, 1397.

<sup>167</sup> CCC, 1398.

<sup>168</sup> CCC, 1402-1405.

1 ings continue to differ. These points of convergence and divergence summarize what has been  
 2 elaborated above in each of our discreet discussions of the five themes. For the benefit of the  
 3 reader, we provide page references to the specific sections from which these summaries derive.  
 4 At the close of each section below we express, as Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians,  
 5 what we appreciate about the theology and practice of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper of our part-  
 6 ners in dialogue, especially in relation to our differences in understanding. This discussion is not  
 7 an official statement endorsed by our respective communions. Rather, it reflects the perspectives  
 8 of our dialogue teams—the fruit of our mutual and prayerful study, writing, and conversations  
 9 together. We offer it in the hope that it will provide a basis for further reflection and dialogue.

10 *3a: Epiclesis—Action of the Holy Spirit*<sup>169</sup>

11  
 12 Reformed and Roman Catholic dialogue participants recognize significant convergence  
 13 in our understanding of the action of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's Supper/Eucharist. Centrally,  
 14 we agree that it is through the work of the Spirit that the sacrament becomes effective. While we  
 15 agree that the Spirit's presence and work in the sacrament is manifest, we also acknowledge that  
 16 the Spirit's presence is inscrutable and the Spirit's work mysterious.

17 We agree that it is the Spirit who gathers and prepares the Church, as well as individual  
 18 persons, for encounter in the sacrament with Christ, who has lived, died, risen, ascended, and  
 19 now reigns as Lord of the Church.

20 We agree that in, with, and through Word and Sacrament, the Spirit makes Christ present  
 21 here and now. Through Word and Eucharist/Lord's Supper, all that Christ has done for us, and  
 22 all of Christ's benefits are offered and given. In faith, the Church receives the person and work  
 23 of Christ. For both the Reformed and Roman Catholics, the Spirit makes present the whole pas-

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<sup>169</sup> See above, Reformed discussion of *epiclesis*, pp. 15-19, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 43-46.

1 chal mystery—the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. For Roman Catholics,  
2 however, a key emphasis of the Eucharist is on the one sacrifice of Christ that is offered to the  
3 Father, through the Spirit, by the Church in union with Christ.

4 We agree that through the sacrament, the Spirit grants, renews, strengthens, and deepens  
5 faith; more fully conforms us to the person of Christ; and inspires the Church’s thanksgiving,  
6 | praise, and faithful living in response to the presence and offering of Christ.

7 We agree that the Holy Spirit effects and deepens our union and communion with Christ,  
8 the Son, and thus also, our union and communion with the Father and Holy Spirit. Through the  
9 sacrament, the Spirit also effects and deepens our union and communion with each other, and  
10 with all the saints who have died in faith. The Spirit forms us, the living and the dead, as the  
11 Body of Christ—many members joined together under the one rule of Christ, the Lord and Head  
12 of the Church.

13 For Roman Catholics, the union that the Spirit effects in the Eucharist is one in which the  
14 Church is so joined to Christ that it is united with the one sacrifice of Christ and shares in  
15 Christ’s own self-offering to the Father. The Reformed affirm that in the Supper the Spirit ef-  
16 fects deeper union with Christ, but not as a joining in Christ’s one sacrifice to the Father. Thus,  
17 the self-offering of the congregation that the Spirit effects at the Lord’s Table is a response, in  
18 thanksgiving, to the unique self-offering of Christ.

19 We acknowledge that in the sacramental rites of all our communions, the Church prays,  
20 explicitly or implicitly, for God to send the Spirit with respect to both the gifts of bread and wine  
21 and the gathered congregation, so that the faithful might receive and be nourished by the body  
22 and blood of Jesus Christ. As concerns the faithful, we agree that God answers the *epiclesis* by  
23 sending the Spirit who creates a disposition of readiness, obedience, receptivity, thanksgiving,

1 and longing in the congregation. As concerns the bread and wine, Roman Catholics believe that  
 2 the Spirit changes the bread and wine into “the body and blood, soul and divinity” of the risen  
 3 Jesus Christ. That is to say, that under the appearance of bread and wine itself, the whole risen  
 4 Christ is given and received. The Reformed believe that the Spirit uses the bread and wine as  
 5 instruments, or true signs, by means of which the faithful are nourished by the true body and  
 6 blood of Christ.

7 As a result of our dialogue, the Roman Catholic participants have come to a greater un-  
 8 derstanding and appreciation of the Reformed churches' conviction that the *epiclesis*, or calling  
 9 down of the Holy Spirit, engenders within the worshipers a deeper readiness, obedience, and re-  
 10 ceptivity to the work of Christ, a renewed spirit of thankfulness for the gift of Christ, and a long-  
 11 ing to be more deeply united to him and to see the day when Christ's kingdom is fulfilled on  
 12 earth as in heaven. The Reformed participants have come to a greater understanding and appre-  
 13 ciation for the Roman Catholic sense of the Church's action, in and with the Spirit, as efficacious  
 14 in the celebration and fulfillment of the Eucharist.

15 3b: *Anamnesis*—Remembering<sup>170</sup>

16 Together we agree that when we celebrate the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, we are remem-  
 17 bering Christ's person and work in a way that goes beyond mere human recollection of a past  
 18 event. In our liturgical practice and theological reflection, Roman Catholic and Reformed Chris-  
 19 tians share a common sense of *anamnesis* as a making present of and participation in the person,  
 20 work, and benefits of Christ, through the Spirit. This shared conviction has three interrelated el-  
 21 ements.  
 22

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<sup>170</sup> See above, Reformed discussion of *anamnesis*, pp. 19-24, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 46-48.

1 First, we recognize that remembering is intimately related to the presence of Christ. As we  
2 remember Christ, we realize Christ's presence with us. Our conversations about Christ's pres-  
3 ence in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, therefore, should be held together with our common reflec-  
4 tions on *anamnesis*.

5 Second, we agree that remembering brings about a participation in Christ that encompasses  
6 past, present, and future. Through our remembering, we realize not only Christ's presence to us  
7 here and now, but our very fellowship in Christ. This common conviction should be kept togeth-  
8 er with the shared emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice in which we participate. As  
9 we remember, we enter into the "once and perpetual" sacrifice that Christ has offered on our be-  
10 half. Through this participation, we also "remember" and believe that our future is entirely  
11 bound up with what Christ has done and is doing now.

12 Third, as was said in the discussion of *epiclesis* above, the Church's act of remembering is  
13 effective by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is an act of God working through the Church. Thus  
14 we acknowledge together that the Church's *anamnesis*, through which is realized our participa-  
15 tion in Christ's person, work, and benefits, is ever a gift. God's action is always primary in this  
16 event.

17 Though we share the conviction that *God's* action is primary in the act of remembering,  
18 our communions also agree that the Church gathered at the Eucharist/Lord's Supper is engaged  
19 as an active partner in remembering. As the congregation comes to receive the sacrament, it  
20 opens itself to the work of the Spirit, enters into the presence of Christ, realizes its participation  
21 in Christ (past, present and future), and offers up its praise and thanksgiving as it remembers  
22 God's acts of salvation.

1           Having identified significant convergence in our understanding of *anamnesis*, we also  
2 note differing emphases on this theme. Reformed Christians make a clear distinction between  
3 Christ's activity and the activity of the faithful who engage in *anamnesis*. The people's activity  
4 is always secondary and dependent on Christ's activity. For this reason, when Reformed Chris-  
5 tians affirm real participation in Christ through the sacrament, we do not understand that we offer  
6 Christ's sacrifice to the Father. Instead, we believe that we participate in Christ, who offered  
7 himself as a sacrifice to the Father. Roman Catholic Christians, on the other hand, confess that  
8 the Church is so joined to Christ that it is united with the one sacrifice of Christ and, in the Eu-  
9 charist, participates in Christ's own self-offering to the Father.

10           A second difference in emphasis concerns the breadth of what is remembered in the sac-  
11 rament. As previously discussed, Reformed Christians in recent years have expanded the scope  
12 of the *anamnesis* of Christ's work, both in confessional formulations and in liturgical expression.  
13 While earlier documents focused almost exclusively on Christ's sacrificial death as that which  
14 was remembered, confessions and liturgies since the mid-twentieth century have emphasized that  
15 the life and ministry of Christ and the hope of Christ's return are also central to the sacramental  
16 remembrance. While Roman Catholic doctrine has also taken into account the saving nature of  
17 Christ's life, the *anamnesis* itself focuses on the death, resurrection, and second coming of  
18 Christ. This apparent difference in emphasis merits further dialogue about the role of Christ's  
19 life in the Church's *anamnesis*.

20           As a result of our dialogue, Reformed participants have gained appreciation for the depth  
21 of Roman Catholic conviction regarding the church's participation in Christ's offering itself, and  
22 see this as a profound invitation to ponder more fully the mystery of our unity with the risen  
23 Christ. Roman Catholic participants have come to appreciate the Reformed communions' em-

1 phasis on God's action in their understanding of sacramental remembering. This emphasis is  
 2 evident in the Reformed tradition's conviction that the church does not share in Christ's own  
 3 self-offering at the Table but rather receives what Christ has offered, which highlights the depth  
 4 and breadth of human dependence on God's grace.

### 5 3c: Presence of Christ<sup>171</sup>

6  
 7 Our dialogue has confirmed that both the Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions have  
 8 always held that Christ is truly present in the Supper, and present in multiple ways. For the Re-  
 9 formed, Christ gives his presence through the Word, calls us to the Table, is present by the Spirit  
 10 in those who come to the Table in faith, bids us through the minister to participate in the effec-  
 11 tive signs of bread and cup, and by the Spirit nourishes us with his body and blood and more  
 12 deeply engrafts us into his mystical body. For Roman Catholics, too, Christ is present by his  
 13 power in the sacraments, in the Word, in the ministry of the priest, and in the praying and singing  
 14 of the Church.

15 However, our traditions differ in their understanding of how Christ is distinctively pre-  
 16 sent in the Supper. We can trace this difference to the historical development of our respective  
 17 theologies of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper and believe it helpful to briefly summarize these de-  
 18 velopments here. Latin and Greek patristic sources display rich eucharistic imagery and theolo-  
 19 gy, including two principal ways to describe how Christ nourishes believers with his very body  
 20 and blood. Some patristic theologians maintained that Christ is present through a conversion of  
 21 the elements themselves, while others described Christ as mystically engrafting believers yet  
 22 more deeply into his real presence.<sup>172</sup> The Roman Catholic tradition developed and maintains a

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<sup>171</sup> See above, Reformed discussion of "presence," pp. 24-29, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 48-52.

<sup>172</sup> On the real presence of Christ, see, for example, Pierre Batiffol, *L'Eucharistie, la présence réelle et la transubstantiation* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1905); Josef Rupert Geiselmann, *Die Eucharistielehre der Vorscholastik*, *Forschungen zur Christlichen Literatur-und Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 15 (Paderborn: F. Schönigh, 1926); Ed-

1 synthesis of these two positions. The Reformed theologians of the Protestant Reformation, how-  
 2 ever, principally followed an interpretation of Augustine on Christ's eucharistic presence, which  
 3 stresses the mystery of the Spirit's engrafting believers more deeply into Christ's real presence.  
 4 As it is clear in our separate presentations above, therefore, both traditions, in their historical  
 5 catholicity and present constructive positions, are interested in the mode of Christ's presence in  
 6 the Eucharist/Lord's Supper.

7         If both traditions insist that what believers receive at the Table is not mere blessed bread  
 8 but Christ himself, what exactly does that mean? For Roman Catholics, it means a substantial  
 9 presence by which the whole Christ makes himself wholly present on the altar. Christ is truly,  
 10 really, and substantially present under the form of the eucharistic elements. This takes place by  
 11 what the Catholic Church calls a "transubstantiation," or change in the substance, of the eucha-  
 12 ristic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, a change that is effected at the moment  
 13 of consecration and lasts as long as the eucharistic species subsist.

14         By taking up this interpretation of the Augustinian mode of presence, whereby believers  
 15 are fed by Christ who engrafts them more deeply into his mystical body, the Reformed tradition,  
 16 too, specifically holds to the true presence of Christ. However, it wishes to distance itself from  
 17 any idea of a "real" conversion of the elements themselves, and thus from the doctrine of tran-  
 18 substantiation. Christ himself is indeed effectively offered by, with, and through the signs of  
 19 bread and wine, which assures believers that as they partake, they are engrafted more deeply into  
 20 Christ's mystical body and are thereby nourished by his flesh and blood. But the flesh and blood  
 21 of Christ themselves remain in heaven, at the right hand of God, since his human body cannot be  
 22 located in several places at once. It is through the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit that our

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ward J. Kilmartin, S.J., *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998). See also Johannes Betz, *Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Väter*, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1961-64); idem, *Eucharistie: In der Schrift und Patristik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979).



1 mystical union with Christ's flesh and blood communicated by the signs is brought about, a point  
2 which we take up in more depth at the end of this section.

3         The Catholic Church also recognizes this Augustinian feature of Christ's presence and  
4 mystical union in the Eucharist, but as we saw earlier, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*  
5 places the discussion of mystical engrafting into Christ in the section on "The Fruits of Com-  
6 munion," which follows the treatment of the presence of Christ as such. For Roman Catholics,  
7 the Eucharist is a fundamental cause of the Church itself, whereas for the Reformed tradition the  
8 mystical communion of believers with Christ is presupposed by the Supper and forms the basis  
9 of the sacrament in which believers are engrafted yet more deeply into Christ and nourished by  
10 his body and blood.

11         One of the most important things that participants in this dialogue have learned to appre-  
12 ciate, therefore, is the deep historical roots of the convergences and divergences cited here. De-  
13 spite our differences, the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions are able to say together that in  
14 the Eucharist/Lord's Supper Christ is truly present, offering at the Table for our nourishment  
15 what he once offered on the cross, so that we receive not just the blessed elements but Christ  
16 himself.

#### 17         *A Further Clarification on Presence*

18         As noted above, the Reformed position is that the risen body of Christ at the right hand of  
19 the Father cannot be located in several places at once. While this might seem to accentuate the  
20 differences between the Catholic and Reformed positions because of the Catholic teaching on the  
21 real presence, there also exists between our two traditions a possible convergence on the eucha-  
22 ristic presence of the body of Christ. We agree that Christ in his risen body is in heaven at the  
23 right hand of God. We also agree that in the Eucharist he communicates in a life-giving manner

1 the substance of his body and blood. Even though we have not arrived at a common understand-  
 2 ing concerning how this presence is communicated through the eucharistic signs of bread and  
 3 wine, we share similar perspectives on how Christ's glorified flesh relates to his presence in the  
 4 Eucharist. Both of our theological traditions have taken up this question of the "how" (or modal-  
 5 ity) of Christ's eucharistic presence. Here we repeat the quote from Calvin already cited and  
 6 compare it to one from Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Mysterium fidei*, also previously cited.

7 Calvin writes:

8 Christ does not simply present to us the benefit of his death and  
 9 resurrection, but the very body in which he suffered and rose  
 10 again. I conclude, that Christ's body is *really*, (as the common ex-  
 11 pression is)—that is, *truly* given to us in the Supper, to be whole-  
 12 some food for our souls. I use the common form of expression, but  
 13 my meaning is, that our souls are nourished by the substance of the  
 14 body, that we may truly be made one with him, or, what amounts  
 15 to the same thing, that a life-giving virtue from Christ's flesh is  
 16 poured into us by the Spirit, though it is at a great distance from us,  
 17 and is not mixed with us.<sup>173</sup>

18  
 19 On this same point, in his encyclical *Mysterium fidei* Pope Paul VI says:

20  
 21 To avoid any misunderstanding of this type of presence, which  
 22 goes beyond the laws of nature and constitutes the greatest miracle  
 23 of its kind, we have to listen with docility to the voice of the teach-  
 24 ing and praying Church. Her voice, which constantly echoes the  
 25 voice of Christ, assures us that the way in which Christ becomes  
 26 present in this Sacrament is through the conversion of the whole  
 27 substance of the bread into His body and of the whole substance of  
 28 the wine into His blood, a unique and truly wonderful conversion  
 29 that the Catholic Church fittingly and properly calls transubstantia-  
 30 tion. As a result of transubstantiation, the species of bread and  
 31 wine undoubtedly take on a new signification and a new finality,  
 32 for they are no longer ordinary bread and wine but instead a sign of  
 33 something sacred and a sign of spiritual food; but they take on this  
 34 new signification, this new finality, precisely because they contain  
 35 a new "reality" which we can rightly call ontological. For what  
 36 now lies beneath the aforementioned species is not what was there  
 37 before, but something completely different; and not just in the es-

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<sup>173</sup> John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, ed. D. W. and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 246 (see note 65, p. 26 above).

1           timination of Church belief but in reality, since once the substance or  
 2           nature of the bread and wine has been changed into the body and  
 3           blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and the wine except  
 4           for the species—beneath which Christ is present whole and entire  
 5           in His physical "reality," corporeally present, *although not in the*  
 6           *manner in which bodies are in a place.*<sup>174</sup>  
 7

8           It is the last clause of Paul VI's quote that Reformed Christians find particularly perti-  
 9           nent. Christ's corporeal presence in the Eucharist is "not in the same manner in which bodies are  
 10          in a place." We know from Scripture that the risen Jesus was recognized and even touched dur-  
 11          ing his Easter appearances. Catholics and Reformed Christians agree that after his ascension  
 12          Christ is physically present at the right hand of the Father in his risen body. We agree that in re-  
 13          gard to the Eucharist we distinguish between Christ's bodily presence in a place, e.g, at the right  
 14          hand of God, and his bodily presence sacramentally. From the Catholic perspective he is bodily  
 15          present in the Eucharist but not in the same manner (or modality) that he was present in the East-  
 16          er appearances. Thomas Aquinas explained Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist as being  
 17          without dimension or extension according to its proper quantity (as in the Easter appearances  
 18          where he was seen and touched), but indeed according to its substance (as in his incarnate and  
 19          glorified humanity). This means he is really present, even physically as Paul VI affirms, while  
 20          his risen body remains in heaven. This is why Catholics reverence the consecrated species and  
 21          even adore Christ in the Eucharist.

22          The Reformed perspective also emphasizes that the risen body of Christ remains in heav-  
 23          en during the Lord's Supper. The Reformed tradition asserts that Christ communicates his life-  
 24          giving glorified flesh to believers through the incomprehensible activity of the Holy Spirit.  
 25          Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper is distinctly sacramental, a point that Reformed theology  
 26          has traditionally affirmed. However, the bread and wine do not become the body and blood of

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<sup>174</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, no. 46 (see note 139, p. 50 above).

1 Christ. Therefore, Reformed Christians consider it inappropriate to reverence the eucharistic el-  
2 ements. While we recognize this remaining divergence, nevertheless, we hope that the conver-  
3 gence on the spatial nature of the risen body of Christ may open up new possibilities for further  
4 discussion on this matter in the future.

5 3d: Offering and Sacrifice<sup>175</sup>

6  
7 With respect to what is offered or sacrificed in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, the Roman  
8 Catholic and Reformed traditions converge on several points and diverge on several others. Us-  
9 ing the language of offering and sacrifice, both traditions tend to agree on what God in Christ  
10 offers and sacrifices on our behalf, but differ on the questions of what *we* offer or sacrifice to  
11 God.

12 Roman Catholics and Reformed converge in seeing the Eucharist/Lord's Supper as  
13 grounded in God's gracious work in creation and salvation history, as a sacramental means of  
14 encountering Christ's redemptive self-offering, and as moving worshipers to offer themselves as  
15 living sacrifices of thanksgiving in imitation of Christ.

16 Both communions agree that God's gracious work in creation and in the history of salva-  
17 tion form the background for the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. God is the creator and giver of life,  
18 the source of all good, and the one whose providential care sustains all. The Eucharist/Lord's  
19 Supper recalls the great events in which God acts to offer or give salvation, and in particular such  
20 events as the Exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt and the return of God's people from the  
21 Exile. Through these events, God is restoring and renewing God's creatures and all creation, res-  
22 cuing them from sin and evil. These events give shape to our understanding of God's character  
23 as one who offers life and hope despite our fallenness.

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<sup>175</sup> See above, Reformed discussion of offering and sacrifice, pp. 29-38, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 52-55.

1           In addition, we agree that, against this background, the Eucharist/Lord's Supper high-  
2 lights Christ's redemptive self-offering which culminates in his death and resurrection. Christ's  
3 sacrificial self-offering is the culmination of God's redeeming and renewing work. Through this  
4 self-offering, the world is reconciled to God and creatures are reconciled to one another. The Eu-  
5 charist/Lord's Supper not only highlights Christ's self-offering, but also serves as a means of  
6 grace by which Christ offers and we receive the benefits of his redemptive and reconciling work.

7           Finally, both traditions agree that in this sacrament, worshipers offer themselves as living  
8 sacrifices of thanksgiving in response to God's grace in Jesus Christ. The act of participating in  
9 the sacrament is not only a receiving of the grace offered by God, but also a presentation of our-  
10 selves as an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God. This self-offering is part of the larger  
11 offering of ourselves as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). In all of these ways, then, the  
12 Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions share a common understanding of what God offers to  
13 us and what we offer to God through the Eucharist/Lord's Supper.

14           Despite the many significant ways in which our communions converge, we also diverge  
15 on some important claims about the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. First, the Reformed communions  
16 speak of Christ being offered to us, but do not say that we offer Christ in the Eucharist or Lord's  
17 Supper. Roman Catholics say that Christ invites us into his act of self-offering, so that the priest  
18 and people offer the eucharistic Christ to the Father as an act of worship. Roman Catholics also  
19 say that, if we are in Christ, then our act of self-offering is also a means by which we offer  
20 Christ. In contrast, the Reformed tradition is not willing to speak of our offering of Christ to the  
21 Father, or of our self-offering as, in part, an offering of Christ. Rather, Reformed confessions  
22 emphasize that the Lord's Supper is God's gift to us, which we receive from God's grace and to  
23 which we respond.    Second, the two traditions differ on the Eucharist/Lord's Supper as a "re-

1 presentation” of Christ’s sacrifice. Roman Catholics see the Eucharist as a re-presentation and  
 2 real participation in Christ’s unique sacrifice on the cross. It is an unbloody re-presentation and  
 3 memorial of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice. In contrast, Reformed Christians see the sacrament as  
 4 a visible presentation of the message of the Gospel and as a means of grace, but not as actually  
 5 continuing Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. In short, the difference here is over each tradition’s  
 6 understanding of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

7 Finally, the two traditions differ over the role of the minister or priest in the sacramental  
 8 offering. In the Reformed tradition, Christ hosts the meal and offers himself to the congregation  
 9 through the office of the minister.<sup>176</sup> Roman Catholics see the priest, acting in the person of  
 10 Christ, as offering Christ’s one sacrifice to the Father on behalf of the people, as well as repre-  
 11 senting the Church in the faithful’s self-offering, in union with Christ, to the Father.

12 As a result of our dialogue, Reformed participants have grown in appreciation for the  
 13 Roman Catholic understanding of how the Church’s profound union with Christ is expressed as  
 14 an actual participation Christ’s own self-offering, to the Father. Roman Catholic participants  
 15 appreciate the Reformed impulse to preserve the priority of God’s action as distinct from the  
 16 Church’s action in response to what God has done and is doing.

### 17 3e: Discipleship<sup>177</sup>

18  
 19 The Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions both strongly affirm the connection be-  
 20 tween Eucharist/Lord’s Supper and Christian discipleship. Historically, this theme has appeared  
 21 in numerous key documents of our respective communities, and in recent years it has reappeared

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<sup>176</sup> As previously noted (p. 24, note 54), among the Reformed churches represented in this dialogue, the celebration of the sacrament is provided for and overseen not only by the minister, but also by elders, deacons and/or other authorized lay persons.

<sup>177</sup> See above, Reformed discussion of discipleship, pp. 38-42, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 55-57.

1 in works of both Reformed and Roman Catholic theology.<sup>178</sup> This is an area where the conver-  
2 gences are many and clear and the divergences are fewer and sometimes manifested as different  
3 tendencies in our two traditions.

4 Both traditions emphasize that the Eucharist/Lord's Supper deepens our union with  
5 Christ. Additionally, both affirm that the sacrament strengthens our communion with the Body  
6 of Christ, the Church. In our liturgies, this deepened communion with and participation in the  
7 Body of Christ is understood also to permeate the Christian's daily witness in the world. In the  
8 RCA's Supper liturgy, for example, the *epiclesis* includes the prayer, "Send your Spirit that we  
9 may grow up in all things into Christ our Lord." In the Roman Catholic Mass, the "Prayer after  
10 Communion" is an explicit or implicit petition that the eucharistic celebration will have an effect  
11 in our daily lives. And one of the imperatives in the Roman Catholic dismissal rite is, "Go and  
12 announce the Gospel of the Lord."

13 Related to this area of convergence is the theme of daily dying to sin and living for God  
14 that grows out of our participation in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. In both Roman Catholic and  
15 Reformed theology, this dying and living have found specific expression in a commitment to  
16 social justice. Indeed, the very first reference to the sacrament in 1 Corinthians 11 is in the con-  
17 text of discipleship and ethics: "All who eat and drink without *discerning the body* [i.e., paying  
18 attention to the needs of the Body of Christ that is the Church], eat and drink judgment upon  
19 themselves" (1 Corinthians 11:29). As our opening discussion of the history of the Eucha-  
20 rist/Lord's Supper also showed, care for the poor has been a key implication of the sacrament  
21 since the early days of Christianity. The Church has emphasized this connection throughout the

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<sup>178</sup> To mention but a few: Monika Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist, 1976); Rodica Stoicoiu, "Eucharist and Social Justice," in David M. McCarthy, *The Heart of Catholic Social Teaching: Its Origins and Contemporary Significance* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), Joseph A. Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985).

1 ages, but the last one hundred years or so have seen an expansion of both Reformed and Roman  
2 Catholic reflection on the relationship between discipleship and economic justice. This inter-  
3 connection between the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, the life of Christian discipleship, and justice  
4 for the poor is repeatedly expressed in more recent confessions, theological writings, and prac-  
5 tices in both of our traditions.

6         Finally, both Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians view the connection between our  
7 participation in the sacrament and our growth in discipleship within an eschatological frame-  
8 work. In the Eucharist/Lord's Supper the Church receives a pledge and foretaste of the fulfill-  
9 ment of God's kingdom of justice and shalom that is both already present and yet to come. In  
10 light of this eschatological perspective, both traditions express confidence in the fact that the Eu-  
11 charist/Lord's Supper is a celebration of and participation in God's promised kingdom. As the  
12 Church receives the body and blood of Christ, the Spirit enables the Church to die to sin and rise  
13 to new life in Christ. We are nourished toward greater faithfulness in our daily witness to the  
14 present and coming kingdom of God, while also recognizing that our discipleship will only reach  
15 perfection when God's glorious kingdom is fully come.

16         This dialogue, therefore, has disclosed significant convergences between Reformed and  
17 Roman Catholic understandings of the relationship between the sacrament and discipleship.  
18 However, we do have a somewhat different understanding of the relationship between the Eucha-  
19 rist/Lord's Supper and the forgiveness of sin. Roman Catholics believe that the Eucharist effects  
20 the forgiveness of venial sins and can help to preserve us from future mortal sin. The Reformed  
21 Christians believe that through our participation in the Supper the Spirit assures us that in Christ  
22 our sins are already forgiven and that our union with Christ both requires and enables us to avoid



1 sin. In either understanding, however, the intended result is a greater joy, thanksgiving, and  
 2 faithfulness in our lives as disciples of Christ.

3 In conclusion, in the area of Eucharist/Lord's Supper and discipleship, we express mutual  
 4 appreciation for the significant convergences we have identified between our communions.  
 5 More generally, we give thanks to God for the ways in which our engagement with the five  
 6 themes of *epiclesis*, *anamnesis*, presence of Christ, sacrifice/offering, and discipleship have in-  
 7 creased understanding, respect, and appreciation among us all, and have provided a basis for fur-  
 8 ther dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Reformed communions.

#### 9 **Section 4: Pastoral Implications**

##### 10 **The Eucharist/Lord's Supper Is Fundamental to Our Union with Christ, the Community,** 11 **and Our Ethical Call**

12  
 13  
 14 The eventual goal of all ecumenical dialogue is the reestablishment of full visible unity  
 15 among all Christian traditions. The final expression of this unity will be to celebrate the Eucha-  
 16 rist/Lord's Supper together in full unity of faith and communion. Our appreciation and  
 17 knowledge of each other's understanding of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper has grown deeper as a  
 18 result of our dialogue. Because visible unity does not exist we are not yet at the point where we  
 19 can participate fully in this sacrament together.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, we can be joined in those things  
 20 which this sacrament calls us to do and be for one another. The Eucharist/Lord's Supper is fun-  
 21 damental to our union with Christ and so we take hope in the realization that as we grow closer  
 22 to Christ, we grow closer to one another until that unity among his followers for which he prayed

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<sup>179</sup> Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians acknowledge that there exists a real but imperfect ecclesial commun-  
 ion between our ecclesial bodies. The pain of this imperfect communion is most poignantly manifested in the rite of  
 communion. Roman Catholics view the reception of Holy Communion as the visible sign of full ecclesial commun-  
 ion. Where this full ecclesial communion does not yet exist, the invitation to receive Holy Communion cannot in  
 conscience be extended to other Christians in attendance at a celebration of Roman Catholic Eucharist. Likewise,  
 Roman Catholics who attend Reformed celebrations of the Lord's Supper must refrain from receiving communion  
 there, even though the Reformed liturgies of the Lord's Supper invite all the baptized, including Roman Catholics,  
 to receive at the table. The pain of this reality is deeply felt by Reformed Catholic and Reformed Christians alike.

1 will be realized in fullness. The Eucharist/Lord's Supper is also fundamental to our union with  
2 the local community in which we find ourselves. Namely, that we will not stand aloof from the  
3 issues and struggles of our neighbors in the communities in which we live, but rather strength-  
4 ened by this sacrament, we go forth as agents of positive change, bringing the gospel message of  
5 hope and wholeness especially to the most vulnerable in our society. Thus, the Eucharist/Lord's  
6 Supper is essential to our ethical call to help the world, or at least that small part of it in which  
7 we find ourselves, to become what God has created it to be.

### 8 **Practical Ways to Use This Document in Local Settings**

9         The best ecumenism always happens on the local level. While it is good and necessary  
10 for religious leaders and theologians to meet in dialogue to discuss matters essential to the recov-  
11 ery of Christian unity, no amount of discussion or dialogue will have lasting impact if the in-  
12 sights, knowledge, and understanding gained therein do not find their way in to the everyday  
13 lives of Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians. Roman Catholic and Reformed ecumenical  
14 officers, pastors, and laity are encouraged to find creative ways for continuing this dialogue on  
15 the local level. This might include:

#### 16 *In General*

- 17         - A jointly sponsored five to eight week course which explores the five topical areas
- 18             outlined in the document
- 19         - Individual study between the local Roman Catholic and Reformed pastors
- 20         - Joint presentations at clergy days of enrichment

#### 21 *On Epiclesis*

- 22         - Invite partner churches on or around Pentecost to do a study on the role of
- 23             the Holy Spirit in the lives of our churches and how we understand this in

1           our sacramental life

- 2           - “Dialogue nights” jointly sponsored by a Reformed and Roman Catholic con-  
3           gregation, on the importance of the Holy Spirit in our respective traditions.

4    *On Anamnesis*

- 5           - Joint study of the notion of sacred remembering in our traditions  
6           - A six week Lenten study of the same culminating on Good Friday  
7           - Invite partner churches to attend each other’s Good Friday services, reflecting on  
8           how we carry the power of that all through the year as a way of sacred remembering

9    *Presence of Christ*

- 10          - A joint Easter study series on the abiding presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament  
11          in the lives of our churches

12   *Offering/Sacrifice*

- 13          - Invite each other to celebrations of confirmation or acceptance of new members with  
14          an emphasis on offering ourselves in service to Christ and the Church  
15          - As our traditions permit, invite each other to attend celebrations of those who have  
16          given their lives in service to Christ and his Church, such as ordinations, installations  
17          of new pastors, sending of missionaries, celebrations of significant wedding anniver-  
18          saries, etc., while lifting up insights from this document

19   *Discipleship*

- 20          - Create partnerships between local Roman Catholic and Reformed congrega-  
21          tions to respond to the issues and concerns of all the people who are present  
22          in our communities

- 1           - In communities that already do partner for charity and justice, to use insights of this  
2           document to study how their sacramental life informs these actions

3  
4  
5   **Areas for Future Dialogue**

6           As this round of the dialogue comes to a close, we are excited by the possibilities that lie  
7   before us, even as we acknowledge the challenges ahead. This has been by far the most ambi-  
8   tious round of the dialogue, and some would say the most challenging. Yet through it all we have  
9   remained committed to join our prayer to that of Christ, “that they all may be one...that the  
10   world might believe...” (John 17:21ff), and so we have indeed drawn closer to one another.  
11   Still there remains much work to be done on our journey together. Having spent the last six  
12   years discussing the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, we noted how each  
13   of our traditions turns to particular sources and authoritative references when they seek to articu-  
14   late the authentic interpretation of their faith tradition. We must also acknowledge that our de-  
15   liberations were hampered by several ecclesiological issues that arose which were sometimes the  
16   cause of considerable tension. Thus we believe that it would be good for us in the future to ex-  
17   plore together these ecclesiological issues which still stand before us, including how our sacra-  
18   mental theology relates to the theology of ministry and ordination, the relationship between an  
19   individual congregation and the universal Church, understanding each other’s polity, and the na-  
20   ture of the Church and how authority is exercised within that understanding in service to the  
21   Body of Christ. Particular emphasis may be paid to how the charism of *episkopé* is understood  
22   and exercised in Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions. In the course of such a discussion we  
23   might even be so bold as to take up the invitation of the late John Paul II given in his encyclical

1 | *Ut unum sint* (1995) to discuss the how the ministry of the Bishop of Rome might be a help and  
 2 | not a hindrance in the cause of Christian unity.

3 |         A great amount of discussion in the current round was also centered on the role of the  
 4 | Holy Spirit in the celebration of the sacrament, especially on the *epiclesis* in the Great Prayer of  
 5 | Thanksgiving. This emphasis caused us to wonder more generally about the Spirit’s labor in the  
 6 | shared practice of praying the “Lord’s Prayer.” Perhaps we might wish to expand this discussion  
 7 | of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

8 |         Another area upon which there was considerable agreement, but about which there is  
 9 | much more to discuss, is the call to discipleship and mission which flows out of the celebration  
 10 | of the sacraments. A thorough discussion of how each of our traditions understand and ap-  
 11 | proach the concept of “mission” and “evangelization,” with special emphasis on its soteriologi-  
 12 | cal, Christological, ecclesiological, and anthropological dimensions, might be particularly fruit-  
 13 | ful.

14 |         The possibilities are rich, the challenges are real, but if our experience in this last round  
 15 | has taught us anything, it is that through his Spirit, the Lord Jesus continues to work in powerful  
 16 | and sometimes surprising ways to the glory of the Father. We are confident that God will con-  
 17 | tinue to pour the Holy Spirit upon us as we continue the work of unity. “If you then, though you  
 18 | are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heav-  
 19 | en give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13).

## 20 | **Our Prayer at the End of This Round of Dialogue**

21 |         Eternal God, Creator of all that is and yet will be,  
 22 |         in the fullness of time you sent your Son to redeem the world,  
 23 |         and daily you send the Holy Spirit to bring new life and peace.

25 |         Faithful to the exhortation of Jesus,

1           we ask you to send your Holy Spirit in abundance  
2           upon the members of the Reformed—Roman Catholic Dialogue  
3           and upon the people in our respective traditions  
4           that through Word and Sacrament  
5           we may continue to grow in deeper communion with your Son  
6           and therefore in deeper communion with each other  
7           until that day when we can share in full communion around your table.  
8           We thank you for the grace of inspiration, patience, and perseverance which you  
9           have given to the members of the dialogue these past forty-five years.  
10          We ask that you continue to guide us as we prepare for the next round of dialogue  
11          that all we do might begin with your inspiration,  
12                    be sustained by you  
13                    and by you be joyfully ended.  
14          We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,  
15          who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
16          one God for ever and ever. Amen.