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## The Perichoresis of Sacrifice and Worship

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The relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass is crucial in understanding how the liturgical assembly participates in worship. In the liturgy, we express our beliefs regarding our relationship with God. The dynamic relationships encompassed within the Trinity inspire our concept of the liturgy as the meeting place of the sacrifice of the Cross and the worship of the people of God. In our liturgies, we sacramentally participate in salvation. This participation in our salvation, as offered by God in the sacrifice of Christ, necessitates ethical implications which flow from our involvement in the liturgy, defining how we act and how we interact with other Christians and the world.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the dynamic relationship of the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass it is essential to examine the Trinitarian theology of several prominent twentieth century Catholic theologians: Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, Edward Kilmartin, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. The Trinitarian perspectives these theologians offer contextualize the liturgical and ethical implications of the relationship of sacrifice and worship. Drawing on comprehensive Trinitarian and sacramental understandings, these theologians solidly support their view of the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and our participation in that sacrifice. The subsequent results derived from Trinitarian and sacramental understandings of this relationship affect our participation in worship, our interactions with other Christians and the world, and our inclusion into the expansive scope of salvation imaged by the Trinity.

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<sup>1</sup> While this paper is primarily an examination of Catholic theologians, the implications derived from this study affect all who come in contact with those who participate in the liturgy and then return to their daily lives sustained by God's grace. The necessary response to our reception of God's offer of salvation, especially in our Eucharistic participation, has many ecumenical implications. For example, the document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper, no. 111, the "Lima Text," World Council of Churches, 1982), contains similar notions of how the eucharistic celebrations of the Christian people necessitate a response in kind, through actions and faith.

## Edward Schillebeeckx

Schillebeeckx's understanding of the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass is rooted in his understanding of the hypostatic union. Christ, as the Son of God, has an everlasting place in the Trinity. From this Trinitarian context, Schillebeeckx states that "everything [Christ] does as man is an act of the Son of God, a divine act in human form; an interpretation and transposition of a divine activity into a human activity. His human love is the human embodiment of the redeeming love of God."<sup>2</sup> These acts of Christ include, most significantly, "his passion, death, resurrection, and exaltation."<sup>3</sup> In these self-giving acts, Christ embodies the fullness of divine love.

Christ's acts are the acts of a historical human person and "the sacrifice of the Cross in its historical manifestation is a reality belonging to the past and cannot be actualized anew in a sacrament."<sup>4</sup> We cannot avoid this truth, lest we drift into heresy denying the full humanity of Christ. However, the salvation effected through the historical crucifixion of Christ is present in the sacraments. Schillebeeckx argues that "this is possible only if, in Christ's historical redemptive acts, there already was an element of something perennial; an enduring trans-historical element which now becomes sacramentalized in an earthly event of our own time in a visible act of the Church."<sup>5</sup> This perennial character is inherent in Christ's essence; truly human and truly divine, these natures are inseparable. The acts of Christ as man are intrinsically bound to the acts of Christ as divine. "Since the sacrifice of the Cross and all the mysteries of the life of Christ are personal acts of God, they are eternally actual and enduring."<sup>6</sup> The expression of the fullness of love demonstrated on the Cross is an expres-

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (Lanham, MD: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 57.

sion of the eternal relationship of the Trinity. The sacrifice on the Cross is the once-for-all sacrifice.

Not only do the acts of Christ embody the redeeming love of God and translate divine activity into the human sphere, these acts effect the saving activity of God. Christ, as the Son of God, both human and divine, provides a link between humanity and the divine through his sacramental work. Schillebeeckx believes that “a sacrament is a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility.”<sup>7</sup> This understanding of Christ’s acts as sacrament allows a mediation between humanity and God, that through Christ as the primordial sacrament, Christ actualizes our redemption.<sup>8</sup> Through the sacraments, the glorified Christ makes manifest his presence on earth, even though he is no longer dwelling bodily among us.<sup>9</sup> Since we are not glorified, we cannot encounter Christ in his glory and access our salvation in that manner. Rather, since Christ is glorified, he approaches humanity through the sacraments, appropriating tangible things in order to that we might encounter with him. The actions of Christ are both a downwards movement of grace and an upwards movement of praise. Schillebeeckx notes that in addition to the “redeeming mercy of God himself coming to meet us from a human heart [in Jesus] . . . there is in the man Jesus also a movement up from below, from the human heart of Jesus, the Son, to the Father.”<sup>10</sup> We enter into the bidirectional movement of Jesus through the sacraments. “In an earthly embodiment which we can see and touch, the heavenly Christ sacramentalizes both his continual intercession for us and his active gift of grace.”<sup>11</sup> This understanding of sacramentality allows us an avenue of participation in the activity of the glorified Christ. The sacramental efficacy “is identical with the historical sacrifice of the Cross in its character as mystery; and consequently it is identical with the actual saving activity of the risen Lord too.”<sup>12</sup> The sacraments do not override the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ but allow us to participate in the sacrifice of the Cross.

### Karl Rahner

Rather than addressing the specific question of how the sacrifice of the Cross relates to the sacrifice of the Mass, an examination of Karl Rahner’s Trinitarian theology demonstrates that our participation in the sacrifice of the Cross is not re-

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 112-115. Schillebeeckx notes that “by the sacraments Christ’s personal act of redemption which is eternally actual, becomes sacramentalized in the Church” (112). Christ instituted the sacraments for the Church on earth.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

stricted to the sacrifice of the Mass. For Rahner, we take part in salvation history by recognizing and accepting instances of divine revelation in our own history and accepting the grace that God offers us. Rahner’s work highlights the essential role of a solid Trinitarian understanding in comprehending the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and our participation in the salvation which God offers.

Rahner discusses the relationship of the immanent Trinity as dynamically unified in spite of appearances of dualism in the various persons of the Trinity. This unification occurs in the self-communication of the Trinity. In the Trinity, we consider the nature of spirit as being one in the ‘perichoresis’ (circumincession) of knowledge and love. The positivism which places knowledge and love merely de facto beside one another in an unreconciled dualism must be excluded. For one thing – no one knows why – the same existent thing is both knowing and loving. Hence, in spite of a real multiplicity of faculties and acts, this one being must have a primordial and total relationship to itself and absolute being; a basic act, whose components are the interrelated and interdependent acts of knowing and willing, of insight and love, as we call them empirically.<sup>13</sup>

The Trinity corrects the misunderstanding that either knowledge or love must submit to the other. In Rahner’s understanding of the Trinity, knowledge and love are moving together and working with each other in maintaining the unity of the Godhead. This unity occurs through the perpetual self-communication of God within God’s self.

The perpetual self-communication of God defines the Trinity as relational within God’s self. Some traits that we attribute to specific persons within the Trinity are traits that the persons do not appropriate; these traits are descriptive of their distinctive personhood, within the unity of the Trinity.<sup>14</sup> For example, “The second divine person, God’s Logos, is man, and only he is man. Hence there is at least . . . one reality of salvation history which is not merely appropriated by some divine person, but which is proper to him.”<sup>15</sup> The Son necessarily became incarnate in the flesh because that is part of the Son’s mission to do so and it is proper to him. The proper dynamic of the Son intimately joins him to humanity. Human nature is not a mask that the Logos puts on; rather, “from the start it is the constitutive, real symbol of the Logos himself.”<sup>16</sup> This self-communication of the Trinity in the hypostatic union of the Logos allows humanity to be in relation

<sup>13</sup> Karl Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology,” in *More Recent Writings*, vol. 4 of *Theological Investigations*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 42. Hereafter referenced as: Rahner, “Mystery.”

<sup>14</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1999), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 33.

with the immanent Trinity, through our relationship with the Logos.

We can apply Rahner's understanding of the self-communication of the Trinity to the way in which we take part in salvation, through the interaction between history and salvation history. "God's offer of himself, in which God communicates himself absolutely to the whole of mankind, is by definition man's salvation."<sup>17</sup> God continually offers God's self in self-communication to the world. This is the revelation of God. We can freely accept or reject God's communication; in this regard, we will our own choice of salvation by either accepting or rejecting God's offer of salvation to us. The offering of salvation by God has been eternally occurring in salvation history.<sup>18</sup>

Insofar as a historical movement lives by virtue of its end even in its beginnings, because the real essence of its dynamism is the desire for the goal, it is completely legitimate to understand the whole movement of God's self-communication to the human race as borne by this saviour even when it is taking place temporally prior to the event of its irrevocable coming to be in the saviour.<sup>19</sup>

Although humanity may only see points of revelation in the historical reality of the world, these in-breakings of revelation are concrete moments where we can see the eternal salvation history taking place. "God has given himself so fully in his absolute self-communication to the creature, that the 'immanent' Trinity becomes the Trinity of the 'economy of salvation', and hence in turn the Trinity of salvation which we experience is the immanent Trinity."<sup>20</sup> In these moments, such as in the Incarnation and in the sacraments, we recognize God's offer of salvation.<sup>21</sup>

The incarnation of the Logos intimately linked the divine plan of salvation with the history of the world.<sup>22</sup> The crucifixion provides a radical lens of interpretation for all historical analyses. "Not until the full and unsurpassable event of the historical self-objectification of God's self-communication to the world in Jesus Christ do we have an event which, as an eschatological event, fundamentally and absolutely precludes any historical corruption or any distorted interpretation in the further history of categorical revelation and of

false religion."<sup>23</sup> From our faith in the crucifixion and its relationship with Christ, we can only interpret our history in the light of this fact. In fact, our salvation is dependent on the historical offering of Jesus. "The salvation of all times depends on this historical event, indeed the salvation of each one of us."<sup>24</sup> Our faith is imperative in accepting the offering of God in salvation and in acknowledging the indwelling of the history of the world in the history of salvation and the self-communication of God.<sup>25</sup>

### Edward Kilmartin

In his comprehensive work on the development of Eucharistic theology, *The Eucharist in the West*, Kilmartin offers his synthesis of Eucharistic theology as it relates to the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass. To begin, Kilmartin understands Christian sacrifice in a threefold manner: "in the first place, the self-offering of the Father in the gift of his Son, and in the second place the unique response of the Son in his humanity to the Father, and in the third place, the self-offering of believers in union with Christ by which they share in his covenant relation with the Father."<sup>26</sup> The first and second movements are important in understanding the sacrifice of the Cross and the third movement develops the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass.

Grounding his understanding of the sacrifice of the Cross as movement within the Trinity, Kilmartin writes that, "In the special mission of the Word, the Holy Spirit is the divine source of the sanctification of the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth by which that humanity was elevated to unity of person with the Word."<sup>27</sup> The Holy Spirit anoints all of the actions of Christ. The actions of Jesus of Nazareth on earth are past historical realities, yet, "Christ's eternal sacrificial attitude, as eternally accepted by the Father since Easter, acquires in time, in the action of the Church, a representative visible form."<sup>28</sup> The Easter event of the resurrection and glorification of Christ is part of his transitus, his movement from suffering to glory as he responded to the Father. It is important to recognize that the response Christ gives, his sacrifice of suffering and death, and the consequential resurrection and glorification, is the only offering acceptable to the Father.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, we must somehow become part of this response

<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, trans. William Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978), 143.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-162.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>20</sup> Rahner, "Mystery," 69.

<sup>21</sup> Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 193-194. While the Incarnation is essential to linking our history with salvation history, it is neither the beginning nor the end of salvation history itself. Salvation history is continually occurring as it in the life of the eternal Trinity.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>26</sup> Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 381-382.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 373. Here, Kilmartin is drawing on Karl Rahner and Angelus Haussling's *The Celebration of the Eucharist*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

in order to relate the sacrifice of the Mass with the sacrifice of the Cross.

After the Easter event of the resurrection and glorification of Christ, the Church, a visible representative of the Trinity working in the world, enters into relationship with the eternal sacrificial attitude of Christ. In describing the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass, Kilmartin notes that, “The eucharistic assembly is presented sacramentally to the once-for-all saving event accomplished in Jesus Christ for the sake of all humanity.”<sup>30</sup> It is important to maintain a distinction between the historic act and the eternal; eternalizing the historical acts of the crucifixion would confuse the distinction between time and the eternity of God. Kilmartin critiques those who support the idea of the historical event of the Cross being eternalized in some manner. “Only a failure to grasp the difference between eternity and time can lead to the idea that the sacrifice of the cross has become ‘timeless.’”<sup>31</sup> However, all historical events are present to the divine since there is no succession of time in the eternal.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, what occurs in the Mass is not a new sacrifice, which would distort the once-for-all ethos of the Cross, but the Eucharistic celebration in the Mass presents us to the saving event of Christ. Drawing on the early Greek tradition, Kilmartin says that the sacrifice of the Mass is “the mystery of the liturgy as the sacrifice of Christ, or, more accurately, as the commemorative actual presence of the sacrifice of Christ.”<sup>33</sup> This understanding draws on the Greek Patristic understanding of symbol, where “the symbol participates in the reality of the prototype.”<sup>34</sup>

The presentation of the assembly to the once-for-all saving event is mediated by the Holy Spirit. The Eucharistic action binds God and humanity together; the Eucharist actualizes “the covenant relationship in which the (katabatic) self-gift of the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit to human beings finds the faith response of the (anabatic) self-gift of human beings through Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father.”<sup>35</sup> In this model, the Holy Spirit mediates the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass. The death on the Cross is the culmination of the response of faith by Jesus in trust, hope, and love and is the “highest possible embodiment of the acceptable response to the covenant initiative of the Father in him.”<sup>36</sup> We participate in the mystery of God in Christ by accepting what the Father did in Christ. We enter into the eternity of God by entering

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 357.

into the single transitus of Christ.

Through the sacraments of the Church, we see the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass demonstrated. Kilmartin also notes that this relationship has implications in our daily lives as we live out the Eucharist.<sup>37</sup> Drawn from the liturgy, these implications include our attitude as we approach the Eucharist and as the Eucharist sustains our ethical activities in our lives. “We can speak of the real presence of the historical saving actions to the effect of the action of the Spirit conforming the believer to Christ’s attitudes.”<sup>38</sup> In looking back to the classical Eucharistic Prayers of the patristic age, Kilmartin identifies a relationship between the ecclesial and sacramental dimensions of our participation, which leads to an understanding of the ultimate purpose for our participation in the sacrifice in the transformation of our attitudes. “The transformation of the eucharistic elements is subordinated to the eschatological transformation, that is, to the reconciliation of all those who participate in the eucharistic communion.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, our eschatological hope, through our partaking of the Eucharist, is the transformation of ourselves into participants in the transitus of Christ and his attitudes.

### Hans Urs von Balthasar

Balthasar acknowledges that there are paradoxes in the Christian faith in regards to the relationship of the sacrifice of the Cross to the sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>40</sup> In spite of these paradoxes, Balthasar presents a model of the relationship between them based on the concept of love and how it ties together the various aspects of the sacrifices. This coalescence of contradictions occurs through Balthasar’s understanding of the paradoxical yet unitive structure of the Trinity. The first paradox is that of the unique historical event of the Cross and the way in which it is present today.<sup>41</sup> Balthasar’s solution to this paradox bases itself on the relationship of the sacrifice of the Cross to the Trinity and to the kenosis, the total self-emptying, of Christ. The self-emptying of Christ took place before he entered the world; in choosing to come to earth, Christ first had to empty himself. This kenosis, in which the Trinity is at

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 356-360.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 359. Christ’s attitudes stem from his response of faith. “The response of trust, hope, and love made by the Incarnate Word in his humanity was a response of faith: of trust, hope, and love: dispositions engendered by the Holy Spirit. . . . Ordinary human persons participate in the new covenant on the side of Christ’s response of faith by accepting in trust, hope, and love what the Father has done in Christ for the salvation of the world” (357).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 342-343.

<sup>40</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, “The Mass, A Sacrifice of the Church?,” in *Creator Spirit*, vol. 3 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 187.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

work, “in all its ever-intensifying and ever more concentrated stages, remains God’s very own secret; he thereby reveals himself and communicates his own nature to the world.”<sup>42</sup> It is ultimately God who is offering the sacrifice on the Cross.<sup>43</sup>

In the eternity of the Trinity, the kenosis is maintained forever, but at the moment of the sacrifice of the Cross, which is part of the self-emptying of Christ, an act of love of the eternal Trinity becomes apparent to humanity. While the event historically is in time and past, Balthasar notes that the acts of the Trinity are continually present. He writes,

If Jesus can be forsaken by the Father, the conditions of this ‘forsaking’ must lie within the Trinity, in the absolute distance / distinction between the Hypostasis who surrenders the Godhead and the Hypostasis who receives it. And while the distance / distinction between these two is eternally confirmed and maintained (‘kept open’) by the Hypostasis who proceeds from them, it is transcended in the Godhead that is the absolute gift they have in common.<sup>44</sup>

The Trinity is so all encompassing that within it is eternally present the extreme distance of the Father and the Son, made historical as the Son self-empties himself, is abandoned on the Cross, dies, and rises. The Holy Spirit maintains this distinction yet demonstrates the love that transcends this distance and exhibits the unity of the Godhead. Because of the unification of the seemingly contradictory dimensions of distance, distinction, and transcendence within the Trinity, especially in the actions of the Son, no human experience can be outside of the breadth of the Trinity’s dimensions.

The actions of the Trinity are rooted in love and an obedience derived from this love. The Johannine model, which integrates absolute obedience with absolute love, is the basis for this description of the Trinity. This model “bears this obedience and makes it conclusive that nothing is harder for the one who truly loves than to let the beloved suffer, to ‘permit’ him to take the path he himself has chosen into suffering, abandonment by God, death and hell.”<sup>45</sup> In these experiences of the obedience derived from love, the Trinity encompasses the entire range of human suffering and sin, creating an opportunity for us in our times of exile to find solidarity with God.

Jesus’ experience of abandonment on the Cross is timeless.<sup>46</sup> The act of sacrifice on the Cross is a restoration of

<sup>42</sup> Balthasar, *The Action*, vol. 4 of *Theo-Drama*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 333. Hereafter referenced as: TD-IV.

<sup>43</sup> Balthasar, “The Mass, A Sacrifice of the Church?” 237f.

<sup>44</sup> TD-IV, 333.

<sup>45</sup> Balthasar, “The Mass, A Sacrifice of the Church?” 217.

<sup>46</sup> Balthasar, *The Last Act*, vol. 5 of *Theo-Drama*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 100. Here, Balthasar notes “The idea

the covenant between God and humanity.<sup>47</sup> It is a covenant that will be broken time and again, since our sins and the sins of all of humanity have broken, break, and will break the covenant. “This is why [the Cross] actuality persists through all the ages of the world. Jesus’ agony lasts until the end of the world (Pascal); in fact, it goes right back to the world’s beginning. His mortal wounds are eternally open (Berulle).”<sup>48</sup> The dynamic movement of the Trinity encompasses the experiences of Christ. As such, the world does not have any other locus except in the unity of the Trinity’s distinctions.<sup>49</sup> In order to represent the world of sin and darkness, Christ does not need to change his place and step outside of the Trinity. He already, in his “absolute distinction,” has the ability to do this.<sup>50</sup> Any action in the world, therefore, must take place within the locus of the Trinity, especially in our interactions with the divine.

This brings us to Balthasar’s second paradox, which is how the Church can offer sacrifice without doubling the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>51</sup> There is no way that the Church can offer a sacrifice that is comparable to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. However, Balthasar addresses this paradox by focusing on the relationship of the offering of the Church with the offering of Christ and how both offerings rely on the model of love mentioned above that works in the Trinity. Christ’s offering of self stems from love and the total obedience to that love. Likewise, our offering of ourselves in the Mass originates in the love we have for God, through which we can do nothing else except be in obedience to the will of God. As we approach the liturgy, we need to take on an attitude of offering, in which we can hand everything over to God. In doing so, we participate in the kenosis of God because we allow ourselves to be instruments of God.<sup>52</sup> Love overwhelms the one receiving it and gives back nothing less than the offer of that total love completely. This love also contains within it an element of openness, since it is only in love and our openness to God that we allow God to work in us. The human person must always have a response that includes “a readiness to let God ceaselessly widen and expand his [or her] spirit for the reception of the word [that is Christ].”<sup>53</sup> In this open-

of the world is from God and in God. Accordingly its whole (non-divine) reality cannot be located anywhere else but in him.” Hereafter referenced as TD-V.

<sup>47</sup> TD-IV, 336.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 333-334.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>51</sup> Balthasar, “The Mass, A Sacrifice of the Church?” 187.

<sup>52</sup> Balthasar, “Kenosis of the Church,” in *Spirit and Institution*, vol. 4 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 134.

<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, “Action and Contemplation,” in *The Word Made Flesh*, vol.

ness, humanity allows for the various material dimensions that make up the Church, relating the sacrifice of the Mass with the sacrifice of the Cross.

We participate in the dimensions of love through our celebrations as a Church. The Church itself flows from love and from the self-emptying of Christ. Our experiences as a gathered community in liturgy depend upon our attitude of self-emptying in reception of God's word. Because the initial self-emptying of Christ was prior to his incarnation, the Church must have also existed, in some form, prior to the self-emptying of Christ on the Cross in order to participate in Christ's offering.<sup>54</sup> Institutionally, however, the Church was formed from the wounded side of the crucified Lord. There is no doubt that subsequent theology owes a great deal to St. John's picture of the opening of Christ's side and the flowing out of water and blood. There can be no doubt at all that, for John, water and blood represent all the sacraments, nor that the whole event, of which the presence of Mary and the beloved disciple beneath the Cross forms a part, signifies an extreme of love, at once divine and human, in its self-manifestation.<sup>55</sup>

The Church in which we participate is both prior to Christ's self-emptying and consequently created from his self-offering. In the institution of the Church on earth, there subsist both of these dynamic forces, which together create the spectrum of our worship. The sacraments that we engage in as a Church exist from their foundation in the outpouring of Christ's own self on the Cross.

From the outpouring of Christ on the Cross, we see that "the eucharist is the culmination and perpetuation of his contemplation on the cross, since in it he continues to pour himself forth, always ready to give himself completely."<sup>56</sup> The Eucharist, as a sacrament, uniquely relates to the sacrifice of the Cross because in it we are agreeing to Christ's sacrifice by willing his death, in a certain sense, every time we consume the Eucharistic elements. This relates to Balthasar's deep underlying principle of love, for in the Eucharist we see that by our participation, we have chosen God above self and all other things.<sup>57</sup> "This is why it is necessary at all costs for the elemental experience also to be communicated that I, the one redeemed – but also (in the contemporaneity) precisely now and again and again the one to be redeemed – make it known by my presence at the sacrifice of Christ that I will this death,

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1 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. A.V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 237.

<sup>54</sup> Balthasar, "Kenosis of the Church," 128f.

<sup>55</sup> Balthasar, "Who is the Church?" in *Spouse of the Word*, vol. 2 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. A.V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 146.

<sup>56</sup> Balthasar, "Action and Contemplation," 236.

<sup>57</sup> Balthasar, "The Mass, A Sacrifice of the Church?" 218f.

in the ecclesial-feminine sense, that I am in agreement with this death."<sup>58</sup>

The ecclesial-feminine sense that Balthasar speaks of in this section is referencing the openness and willingness of love to let the Son go and do the will of the Father, even unto death on the Cross. While the sacrifice on the Cross is historically past, Christ's salvation is effective for all time. In the Eucharist we enter into the sacrifice of Christ by our acceptance of what God's will accomplishes. The willingness of allowing God to work is "a Yes fundamentally open a priori, disposing itself of nothing, but holding itself ready in all things and allowing itself to be formed."<sup>59</sup> The kenosis of Christ demonstrates this fundamental openness to the will of the Father. The openness is characteristically ecclesial-feminine because Balthasar's model for this love and openness is Mary, who with her fiat is an ultimate example to us of how to give ourselves to God in love, and willingly let God work through us.<sup>60</sup> From this understanding, the Eucharist is "thanksgiving to the Father for the departure of the Son and thanksgiving that we are permitted to let him depart."<sup>61</sup>

Because the Trinity and the all-encompassing love that dwells within its distinctions and unity is the locus of our worship, the Eucharist is all-encompassing as well, reaching out to sinners and all of humanity. Balthasar notes that the morsel handed to Judas shows that this Eucharistic word is at the same time the Word that is given over into the Passion and the abyss of sin; Judas is the only one to be expressly named, while the Communion of the others, with the others, is meant to shine forth silently from the situation of the Last Supper, from the bequest of the washing of the feet, and from the final intimacy of the word that is poured forth and 'preserved' ([John] 17:6) by the Church.<sup>62</sup>

Christ does not distance himself from those whose burden he bears, but in fact "he is in them eucharistically."<sup>63</sup> The Eucharist is handed to humanity; the sacrifice of the Cross is given and is unfathomably deep. Because our "no" to God, when we sin and do not answer in total love, is groundless in the face of the grace God offers, the expiation for this

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 224-231 and 240. Balthasar uses Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as a model for the Church and for all Christians, male and female, in her love for God and her openness to God's will. In this particular section Balthasar is drawing on the work of Andrienne von Speyr, who uses the "mystery of the three Marys" (Mary of Bethany, Mary the mother, and Mary of Magdala) to demonstrate the model love for Christians to embrace. This model of love fits in with Balthasar's own understanding of love and obedience, which Christ exhibits in his kenosis.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>62</sup> Balthasar, "Seeing, Believing, Eating," in *Spouse of the Word*, vol. 2 of *Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 491.

<sup>63</sup> TD-IV, 337-338.

groundless “no” of sin in the sacrifice of the Cross is a transfiguration that is groundless as well.<sup>64</sup> This transfiguration is beyond our imagination, it is the glorification of Christ, so that he may eternally effect salvation in the Trinity. In the sacraments, the Church gathers in all its members. While sinful human beings may make up the institutional side of the Church, the Church itself is an expression of “the presence of the cross and the redemption. It is, therefore, only in function of the cross, and so of holiness, that the institutional side of the Church can be rightly interpreted.”<sup>65</sup> By entering into Christ’s sacrifice, through our acceptance of it and giving of self in love, we enter into the relationship of the Trinity. In the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass, the paradoxes that are inherent in these participate in the Trinity’s paradoxes as we base the grounding for this relationship on the love that communicates kenosis, obedience, and distinction and unity.

### Conclusion

In order to realize the full effects of the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass in our lived experiences, we must approach our participation in this relationship conscious of the Trinitarian and sacramental factors that surround it. The crucifixion of Jesus on the Cross is a historic reality. Schillebeeckx, Rahner, Kilmartin, and Balthasar all acknowledge this fact and offer various viewpoints of how the sacrifice offered in this historic reality is eternally efficacious. Their various perspectives rely on strong Trinitarian foundations, from which follow sacramental truths pertaining to our participation in the sacrifice of the Cross and the effect it has on our salvation.

Rahner situates the sacrifice of the Cross, not in direct conversation with the sacrifice of the Mass, but within the Trinity. Beginning with this perspective, Rahner is able to establish the mission of each person within the Trinity (immanently) before relating those missions to our perception of them in the revelation of the Trinity within history (economically).<sup>66</sup> When we experience the revelation of the Trinity in our historic reality, we are experiencing the proper missions of the persons of the Trinity and the self-communication of God. The immanent Trinity is eternally present and though we see instances of the immanent Trinity economically within our historical confines, our history is continually present to the eternal Trinity.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> TD-IV, 338.

<sup>65</sup> Balthasar, “Theology and Sanctity,” in *The Word Made Flesh*, vol. 1 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. A.V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 201.

<sup>66</sup> Rahner, *The Trinity*, 27; Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 193-194.

<sup>67</sup> Kilmartin, 359.

Humanity perceives the Trinity’s self-communication of dynamic love in the expression of the kenosis of the Son; his incarnation and sacrifice on the Cross. The dynamic relationship of the self-communication of the Trinity in the hypostatic union allows us to enter into the Trinity. Because of the intimate bond of the Trinity and its outward expression in the Logos, humanity interacts with the Trinity through Christ as he acts as the primordial sacrament, the foundation for all sacramental expressions of the Church on earth.<sup>68</sup> Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross is an eternal act of God in its effects of salvation; this principle of salvation is sacramentalized in our reality through the Church and its sacraments.<sup>69</sup> In the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, we have an expression of the dynamic immanent life of the Trinity, where love, obedience, and kenosis coalesce in God’s grace-filled offer of salvation.

Humanity interacts with the sacrifice of the Cross in the sacraments; through our participation in these sacraments, particularly in the expression of salvation found in the Eucharist, we are obliged to act in a manner befitting the sacrifice Christ offered for us. The World Council of Churches’ Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry document addresses some of these manifestations of our actions as they stem from our participation in the eucharistic sharing:

Solidarity in the eucharistic communion of the body of Christ and responsible care of Christians for one another and the world find specific expression in the liturgies: in the mutual forgiveness of sins; the sign of peace; intercession for all; the eating and drinking together; the taking of the elements to the sick and those in prison or the celebration of the eucharist with them.<sup>70</sup>

In the Eucharist, we offer ourselves to God and are presented to God with the offering of Christ, the perfect sacrifice.<sup>71</sup> The transformation of our attitudes to those of Christ affects our participation in the liturgy through the manner in which we manifest our worship of God. Taking on the attitudes of Christ, we transform ourselves in how we enter into worship with a view towards our eschatological hope and our subsequent interactions with the world outside of the liturgy. Through our Eucharistic sharing, we take on the attitudes of trust, hope, and love, derived from faith in the will of God. These attitudes remain with us as we go forth from the liturgy and influence our interactions with others.

<sup>68</sup> Schillebeeckx, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>70</sup> Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (Faith and Order Paper no. 111, the “Lima Text,” World Council of Churches, 1982), <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents.html> (accessed December 9, 2012), no. 21. Hereafter, referenced as: Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry.

<sup>71</sup> Kilmartin, 357.

In receiving the Eucharist, we accept God's will as Christ's sacrifice on the Cross was an acceptance of God's will.<sup>72</sup> We respond in the obedience of love to the will of God. This response of love and obedience crosses denominational boundaries, as we strive to do the will of God as God offers salvation to all of humanity. This salvation God offers us in the total self-offering of Christ exemplifies the immanent life of the Trinity in its total self-communication of love. In the experience of Christ's kenosis culminating in his death, resurrection, and glorification, the Trinity encompasses the entire breadth of human experience. As we go into the world fortified by our Eucharistic participation, we encounter the entire spectrum of human emotions and experiences. "All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ."<sup>73</sup> Knowing that the Trinity encompasses all of these experiences, our exchanges with others take on a sacramental character as we communicate the grace given in our worship. From this understanding, we see that the liturgy is open to all dimensions of the human experience; our worship of God is necessarily accessible to all of humanity because of the expansive scope of the Trinity's eternally united distinctions.

In the sacramental expressions in the liturgy of the Trinity and the sacrifice of the Cross, we experience a transformation of our attitudes to conform to Christ. In this transformation, we respond to God's offer of salvation in love and obedience through our participation in the liturgy and our actions that stem from our sacramental engagement. God's offer of salvation is for all of humanity, yet not everyone chooses to accept this offer. By taking part in the sacrifice of the Mass, through the sacraments, we accept what God has worked through Christ's self-offering. Our participation necessitates an ethical, lived response from us, affecting all aspects of our daily lives and interactions with others. Since the Trinity encompasses all dimensions of human life, our lived response to God's offer of salvation includes our interactions with all of humanity. In the locus of the liturgy, the relationship of the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass finds its expression through our sacramental participation and our lived manifestation of the acceptance of God's offer of salvation.

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<sup>72</sup> Balthasar, "The Mass, A Sacrifice of the Church?," 232.

<sup>73</sup> Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, no. 20.

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