The 2014 Edward Cardinal Egan Lecture

The Eucharist: Words of Christ, Words of the Church

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The topic of my lecture is the Eucharist as prayer, as human speech in the presence of God. In the Eucharist we as Christians use the words of Christ and the words of the Church to speak with God, and I hope my remarks will help us appreciate the way these words enable us to do so.

The Eucharist as prayer is obviously an appropriate topic for a lecture associated with the Magnificat Foundation. The MAGNIFICAT initiative has made an extraordinary contribution to Eucharistic life in countries all over the world. What it has done is an example of both grace and practical wisdom, of discovering and doing exactly what is needed at a given time, place, and circumstance. One of its successes lies in the way it uses both images and words in the service of Christian faith in our modern digitalized world. The idea that occurred to Pierre-Marie Dumont was truly an inspiration, and we are deeply indebted to him and his colleagues for what they have done for the liturgy and life of the Church. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Edward Cardinal Egan, in honor of whom this lecture series is named, and to express our gratitude for his support of the Magnificat Foundation.

The Eucharist is a prayer, human speech in the presence of God. This raises a prior question; how do we *dare* to speak in God's presence? What can we possibly say? If we realize what the presence of God means, if we can even glimpse the glory and power of God, are we not overwhelmed and rendered fearful and speechless, like the prophet Isaiah, who, when the glory of God appeared to him, said "Woe is me, I am undone"?

And yet the same Scriptures that tell us about God's power and glory also reassure us that we can and should address him. Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and even Adam and Eve at the very beginning, are all described as speaking with God, and through such episodes the Bible reveals to us something about what God is, who we are, and what our relationship with him is. God is eternal and all-powerful and he has created us, but still we can address him and even ask him questions. Our human reason is not extinguished in the presence of God. In particular, the psalms of the Old Testament show us in great detail how we should speak with God in all the circumstances and diverse emotions of life. The psalms even give us the words that we should use. The bible does not just tell us about God, but also about how we are to conduct ourselves in his presence. It authorizes us to speak to and with him and shows us how to do so.

This instruction, which began in the Old Testament, is continued in the New Testament in the gospels, where the people who spoke with Jesus were not just turned *toward* God and his kingdom by what he said to them; they gradually came to realize that in speaking with Jesus of Nazareth they somehow were in the presence of God and were actually speaking with God, who now spoke to them with an individualized human voice, the voice of the man Jesus Christ. Jesus was more than a prophet and showed himself to be more. The believer's recognition of who Jesus is occurs most vividly in the cry of Thomas the Apostle after the Resurrection, when he, Thomas, says to Jesus, "My Lord and my God." Notice that he says these words to Jesus and not simply about him. These words of the no-longer-doubting Thomas are the climax of the Fourth Gospel, and indeed they are the climax of all the gospels. The point of the gospels is to lead all of us to that same exclamation. The lesson of the New Testament is that we can address God not only as our creator and lawgiver; we can now address God as one who has spoken with us as a man and as our Savior, who now lives as a source of life for us. It is, therefore, part of the faith of the Church that we are in the presence of the God who created and redeemed us and that we can speak or pray to him,

whether we address him in the person of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.

We turn now to the Eucharist. The subtitle of my lecture is, "Words of Christ, words of the Church." My claim is that both Christ and his Church speak during the celebration of the Eucharist and that we can be helped to pray the Eucharist by observing how the words of Christ and the words of the Church come to life in it. I begin by recalling that the Catholic Mass is composed of two major parts, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We will consider each of these parts.

1. The Liturgy of the Word

In the Liturgy of the Word, we *listen* to the Scriptures. They are read to us; we *say* very little. We hear a passage from the Old Testament and a psalm, then something from the New Testament epistles, and finally a passage from the gospels. For Christians, this Eucharistic reading of the Bible is the paradigmatic reading of the Scriptures. We can and should read the Bible outside of Mass, but at Mass we hear the Word of God in conjunction with the Sacrament of the Lord's Incarnation. All our other readings of the Bible are measured by this one in the Mass, which occurs as we are about to come into the eucharistic presence of God made man. The Bible as a whole enjoys this same relationship. The Old Testament anticipates the coming of God, the gospels record it, and the Acts and epistles look back on it. The entire Christian Bible is centered on the Incarnation, and the Eucharist is the sacramental continuation of the Incarnation. Our primary reading of the Scripture occurs when the Church reads it to us during the Mass.

I also want to draw your attention in particular to the final part of this Liturgy of the Word, the recital of the Creed. At this point, we, as members of the Church, do not just listen to the words, as we did with the Scriptures; rather, we recite them. We *say* the Creed and we say it each in our own name; we each personally say "I believe," and in our English translation we use this phrase four times. The Creed is a beautiful prayer and an important part of the Mass. It was composed by the Church after the biblical times, but as St. Thomas Aquinas says, "It is not something added (*additum*) to Sacred Scripture, but rather something drawn from (*assumptum*) from Sacred Scripture" (*ST* II-II q. 1, a. 9, ad primum). The Creed is the work of the Church, the Church's distillation and restatement of Scripture through human history. It summarizes the Councils of the Church, which needed to be called because of controversies that arose and clarifications that needed to be made. The Creed that is said at Mass is taken from the first two ecumenical councils of Nicea in 325 and Constantinople in 381 AD. Since the Creed is the work of the Church, it is appropriate that we do not just listen to it, as we did to the Scriptures; rather, as members of the Church we use our own voices to express it. After having listened to the biblical readings we now speak our response, just as the Church, under the pressure of historical events and turbulence through the centuries, reasserted the essentials of what God revealed to us and restored the peaceful possession of the faith. We declare our faith and pray it before God, as we recall the mystery of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and as we recount God's work of creation and salvation. The Creed is not only a statement of doctrine but also a hymn of praise.

In reciting the Creed, we use the first person singular and say "I believe," and so we—each one of us—make this profession of faith our own, but we do not appropriate it as solitary individuals. We do not just express our own opinion. We express our faith together with the other people in our immediate congregation, but we also join the community of all other Christians in the history of the Church as we share in the one faith.

The Liturgy of the Word, the first part of the Mass, thus involves the words of the Church in various ways: in the reading of the Scriptures, the homily, and the Creed.

2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

We turn now to the second part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This extends from the Offertory to Communion, but its center is the Eucharistic Prayer, which begins with the Preface and Sanctus and concludes with the Great Amen. The focus of our attention is now different from what

we focused on in the first part of the Mass. We no longer sit back and listen. Now, in the Preface and Sanctus we are turned toward God the Father. At the beginning of the Preface the priest, speaking for the congregation and the Church, says, "Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God." It is important to note that in these words we speak to God the Father. We address him as our Creator but we also address him as the origin of the Holy Trinity. We enter into a new and eminently sacred context, the life of the Holy Trinity, and being aware of this new focus will help us to pray the Eucharist appropriately. We use the second person pronoun "you," and with it we address the Father and express what he has done. In the Preface we say, for example, "Through your beloved Son you have created the human race, and also through him you … have formed it anew." We distinguish the Father from the eternal Son. Our prayer, the prayer of the Church, reaches within the Holy Trinity to God the Father; the Preface is directed not to the Son or the Holy Spirit, but to the Father, the source of the Trinity, and this direction of our prayer continues throughout the entire Eucharistic Prayer, even to its conclusion in the Great Amen, where we again explicitly address the Father and say "All glory and honor is yours, O God Almighty Father," and as we say that this glory is accomplished through the Son: "Through him and with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit."

The mystery of the Holy Trinity comes to the fore in this central prayer of the Church, and it comes to the fore not as a topic of theological reflection or catechesis; it comes to the fore in the Divine Person whom we address in prayer. We use the words given us by the Church and we address God the Father and come into his presence as we begin, continue, and conclude the Eucharistic prayer, the Canon of the Mass. This focus of the Eucharistic Prayer should be reflected in the way the Prayer is said.

There is another adjustment during this part of the Liturgy. As we address God the Father at the start of the Eucharistic Prayer, we also enter into a new community. When we recite the Preface we say that we make our prayer "With Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, with the hosts and Powers of heaven." That is, we join "the company of Angels and Saints" and we join them "in one chorus of exultant praise." We are no longer simply a congregation of people who believe and hope, we are no longer just the Church that is "on the way," *in via*. Rather, we now participate in the celestial liturgy of those who have arrived at their destination and who now see. We become members of the community that includes those who praise God in his immediate presence. Our liturgy joins theirs, as we say words that were expressed by the prophet Isaiah as the words of the Seraphim: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, *heaven and earth* are full of your glory." The prayer of the Preface and Sanctus is majestic. It sets the tone for the liturgy that follows, in particular for the consecration and sacrifice of the bread and wine as the body and blood of the Redeemer, who is God the Eternal Son. It is in this setting of earth *and* heaven that the Eucharist is accomplished.

That we enter into this new context is taught by the Second Vatican Council in its document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (§8). The Council says, "In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims…; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army." This is what the Council teaches, and what I am now trying to do in these theological reflections is to show how the words and actions of the liturgy express the new community we join during the Mass.

A few moments ago I discussed the Creed, the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word, and I said that in reciting the Creed we speak as members of the Church on earth, the Church of the Scriptures and the Councils and the believers who live in faith and hope. But now, in the Preface and Sanctus, the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we begin to speak as members of a community that includes those who live in vision and perfected charity. We begin to act sacramentally with the saints and angels in the celestial liturgy, our faith and hope that we may share their vision is confirmed, and we enter at least for these sacred moments into the heavenly Jerusalem. This is where we are placed, this is where we are located, by the words that the Church gives us to pray. Our prayer and our disposition should reflect this sacred context, the Holy of Holies. How we conduct ourselves in the Mass, the way the Mass

is celebrated by the priest and by the people alike, our demeanor and the way we say the words, should reflect the fact that we are participating in the liturgy of the angels and saints and that we are addressing God the Father, the origin of the Most Holy Trinity. Both the priest and the congregation should speak and act in keeping with this context.

3. The Center of the Eucharistic Prayer

We now turn our attention to the center of the Eucharistic Prayer, to the consecration of the bread and wine in the sacrifice of the Mass, and here I want to pay close attention to some details in the words that we use. As the liturgy proceeds after the Sanctus, the Eucharistic Prayer is spoken by the priest in the name of the Church. We pray for the Church herself and for the pope and bishops, we pray for the faithful, we commemorate the blessed Virgin Mary, Joseph her spouse, and the apostles and martyrs. In all these prayers the priest uses the pronoun "we." He says, for example, "To you, therefore, most merciful Father, we make humble prayer and petition," and he refers to the sacrifices "which we offer you." The priest, as ordained by the Church, speaks in the name of the Church and specifically in the name of the church congregated at the particular celebration in which these words are being said.

The priest still speaks this way when he comes to the epiclesis, the calling down of the Holy Spirit. He extends his hands over the offering and asks God to send the Holy Spirit to sanctify "these gifts" so that they may become *"for us* the body and blood of your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." Even there he uses the first person plural and speaks in the name of the Church.

But then, at this central and solemn moment of the Mass, the form of the prayers changes, and it is important for us to pay attention to the modifications that follow. After he calls down the Holy Spirit, instead of continuing to petition God in prayer, the priest begins a short narrative, a recital of something that happened in the past. He begins to tell a very short story. The priest begins this narrative by saying, "On the day before he was to suffer, he took bread into his holy and venerable hands." As we as participants listen to these words in the past tense, we are taken back to the time and place of Christ at the Last Supper. We must notice, however, that these words are not being said primarily to us as we assist at the Eucharist. These words are still being addressed to God the Father, just as were the prayers that came before this moment of the Eucharist. The narrative or story is being told to the Father, not primarily to us in the congregation. In fact, the words go on to make this focus explicit as they say, "And with eyes raised to heaven, to you, his almighty Father, giving *you* thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread, and said…."

Now that the liturgy is recited with the priest facing the congregation, it is all too easy to think that this very short story is being addressed to the people, that it is a narrative telling *them* what was done at that time in the past. But in fact the narrative remains focused toward God the Father. It is as though the Church were reminding the Father of what Jesus did at the Last Supper. The meaning of the liturgy is enhanced and deepened for us if we are aware of this perspective. Our minds are turned to the Last Supper and the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ as they are present to God the Father. They are past for us, they happened a long time ago, but they are eternally present to him, and because they are always present to him, they can become truly present to us as well. The focus of this part of the Mass, the wider setting of the celestial liturgy and the address to God the Father, opens the context in which what occurred in the past can become truly present again. God does not remember as we remember. We as part of the Church offer again Christ's own offering to God. Or more precisely still, Christ offers himself again to the Father through the Church and through us as participants in the Church's liturgy. Jesus the Christ is the one who is truly acting, especially at this time in the liturgy. We are caught up in something far greater than ourselves; we become involved in the redemptive action of Christ before the Father. The liturgical words of the Church place us there by placing us in the presence of the eternal now of the Triune God. The fact that our prayer is before the eternal Father helps us understand that there was only one sacrifice

of Christ on the Cross, and yet that every Eucharist is also a sacrifice, not as added to the one accomplished by Christ, but as reenacting that one and only sacrifice. Only because God is so different from the world, only because he transcends the world and its time, and only because the Eucharist enters into God's "space and time," his eternal present, can the sacrifice of the Eucharist be the one and the same sacrifice that Christ offered for our redemption. The Eucharist is a perpetual reminder to us of the transcendence of God. The Eucharist could not be what the Church believes it to be, if God were not the almighty and eternal Creator of our world.

A moment ago I repeated the words of the Last Supper story, the institutional narrative of the Mass, but I did not finish them. I left out the liturgical words of consecration. In my earlier reading, the last words I stated were, "And with eyes raised to heaven, to you, his almighty Father, giving *you* thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread, and said. . . ." In the Mass, these words are followed by the words, "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you." These are the words that Christ is recorded in the Scriptures as saying at the Last Supper, and they are at the center of the Eucharistic Prayer. In the theology of the Church, these words, embedded within the larger context of the liturgical prayer and enclosed within the institutional narrative, bring about the Eucharist. These words of consecration, along with the words said over the chalice, are at the center of the liturgy.

The words are said by the priest, but they are said in a very unusual way. They are a quotation. They are said by the priest, but they are said as having been, or as being, spoken by Christ. The institutional narrative concludes with a quotation of the words of Christ.

I would like to interrupt my theological remarks for a moment to make some philosophical comments about quotation. These philosophical reflections will help us appreciate the theology of this sacrament. To be able to quote what someone else has said is one of the most marvelous resources of human speech. It is a distinct property of human reason. When we quote someone else, we let that other person's mind and speech come to life through our own voice. We use our voice, one of our bodily powers, to allow the thinking and the mind and the action of another person to become present to our audience. Quotation is a spiritual use of a bodily power (the human voice) and it is distinctively human, quite different from what simple animals can do. An animal can bark or roar or chirp only in its own voice. Think of a lion roaring; one lion cannot use his voice to roar what another lion had roared on the previous day; the mind of that second lion cannot be brought to life in the voice of the first. If I may turn to a more familiar and domestic example, Fido cannot bark what Rover had barked the day before; the reason he cannot do so is that he is barking and not using words. We human beings, however, can insert the saying of someone else into our own saying. Quotation is an ordinary, everyday procedure. No one has taught us to do it. In fact, no one *could* teach us to do it; how would they go about doing so? Quotation comes with what we are. We all do it and we do it all the time, and yet it is one of the great achievements of language. We tend to think that human reason is expressed primarily in complicated logical arguments, poetry, mathematics, and theories, but one of the most important expressions of reason is quotation, where language is used to let the mind of another person come into active presence through our own speech.

The power of quotation, furthermore, is an extremely important instrument in the human capacity to be truthful. It is involved in the issue of truth. Only because we can quote someone else, or even quote ourselves from another time and place, can we be concerned with verifying whether what has been said is true or false. And finally, it is not just the opinions and statements of another person that can enter into our speech through quotation; the *authority* of that other person also comes through in our speech. We may have very little authority of our own in a given domain, but it is sometimes possible for us to appeal to what someone else has said, someone who has much more authority and status than we do. Our speech benefits from the knowledge and the prestige of that other person, whose representative we have made ourselves to be. Quotation enables us to do all this, and we do it easily and spontaneously; even children can quote others. It is an overlooked power of human reason, a fascinating power of displacement and representation.

May I observe that these brief remarks about

quotation are an example of what philosophy ought to be. Philosophy at its best brings to light what we all take for granted; it turns our minds to what is ordinary, what we do every day, and it shows how marvelous and interesting it all is. In this instance we have focused on quotation, but we might have looked at what words are, or what it is to make a decision, or what friendship is. Philosophical insight need not be just academic and it ought not to be mystifying. It should turn the ordinary into the brilliant. It can also enter into the service of theological reflection on our Christian faith, as it does in what we are saying now.

Let us turn back to the words of consecration in the Eucharist. We had been talking about the institutional narrative, the words that make up the short story about the Last Supper, which lead up to the central moment when the voice of the priest is used to speak the words that were spoken by Christ. St. John Chrysostom, one of the Greek Fathers of the Church, has described this action in this way: "The priest lends his tongue and his hands to Christ." This passage was quoted by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, which appeared in 1947. The priest lends his tongue by quoting the words of Christ. The title of my talk, you will recall, is "The Eucharist: Words of Christ, Words of the Church." Up to this point in the Mass, we have heard primarily the words of the Church: in the prayers, in the Creed, in the Preface, and even in the institutional narrative leading up to the consecration, the Church speaks in the first person plural, as "we" are speaking to God. But at this point the words of Christ are explicitly stated—"Take this and eat of it, for this is *my* Body, Take this and drink of it, for this is the chalice of *my* Blood"—they are stated in the first person singular and they are stated as being said by him. *His* words are quoted; Christ becomes the speaker within the Church. It is true, of course, that Christ has been the primary minister of the entire liturgy, and even the words of the Church have been his own words through his mystical body, but now his authority and his agency become explicitly expressed in the very grammatical form of the words. The liturgy of the Church achieves this theological presence of the action of Christ by taking advantage of the natural resources of human language and speech; she weaves these dimensions together in an almost musical way: the Church is speaking, the priest is speaking, and now explicitly Christ is speaking. The different voices and the different persons all come together in this verbal chorus at the center of the liturgy, and it helpful for us, as we pray the liturgy, to be aware of these elegant patterns.

4. The Sunday Eucharist and the Words of Christ

The Eucharist is celebrated on each day of the week, but its primary celebration is the Sunday Eucharist. As Pope Benedict XVI has often observed, it was very significant that Christians moved their holy day from the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday, to the first day of the week. The Sabbath marks the day on which God rested after his creation, but the first day of the week, Sunday, marks the beginning of creation. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus bring about a new creation, not out of nothing but out of the deeper nihilism of sin and death. The Eucharist of the Christian Sunday expresses a new creation nested within the first. It is the beginning of a life that is more than what was created before, and it is a life inaugurated by God himself in the Incarnation and Resurrection of the eternal Son.

Consider how words are used in God's act of creation as it is described in the book of Genesis. In that biblical description, God creates simply by speaking. He does not need to struggle with resisting forces or to overcome another power to bring about the being of the world and the things in it. He creates from nothing. All he needs to do is to speak the words, which is the easiest of all things to do: "And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there *was* light." (Genesis 1:3) As the Old Testament book of Judith says, "Let your every creature serve you, for you spoke and they were made." (16:14) Things are there because God says them to be. Our words, in contrast, depend on the things that are already there; our words are measured by the way things are. Our words come after the being of things; God's words come before.

At the Last Supper, it was God the Son, incarnate as man, who spoke. He prefigured his Death and Resurrection and spoke with a human voice, but his words contained divine power and authority. His words, "This is my Body" and "This is the chalice of

my Blood," were not just the words of a man but the words of God incarnate. It was not a creation out of nothing, but it was a change in the things he spoke about, and what he said was done. It is done again as his words come to life when they are quoted in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. And may I reaffirm how appropriate it is for the Church to quote the words of Christ himself at this point in the liturgy, and to let his words speak for themselves.

Sunday and its Eucharist recall the mystery of creation and the Holy Trinity. Sunday recalls the first day of creation, the work of the Father; it also recalls the day of Resurrection and redemption, the work of the Son. Both of these actions involve the spoken word of God: the word of God the Creator and the word of the incarnate Son.

Sunday also recalls the day of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, which also took place on the first day of the week. In this case, however, the Holy Spirit did not speak in his own voice; the sound he made was simply "a noise like a strong driving wind." (Acts 2:2) Instead of speaking his own words, the Holy Spirit used the voices of the apostles, which were understood by all the people who heard them, no matter what their native language was. The words at Pentecost are spoken by the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the entire Sunday liturgy is also accomplished under his silent guidance. The Holy Spirit never speaks in the Eucharist, but he is called down on the bread and wine to be consecrated, he enables us to enter into communion with the sacrament, and he strengthens us at the end of Mass to go and bear witness to what we have heard, seen, and received.

The Holy Spirit is called down on the bread and wine in the epiclesis, the initial part of the consecration; the priest asks that God the Father send the Spirit to sanctify these gifts "so that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." As you may know, in liturgies of the Eastern Christian Churches, the calling down of the Spirit takes place after the words of consecration. The consecration is understood to be completed by this work of the Holy Spirit; it is at this prayer that the transformation of the bread and wine takes place. This eucharistic theology shows how important this prayer is, and I would suggest that the epiclesis should be given more prominence in our Roman liturgy as well, in order to articulate more clearly the central part of the Mass. In our liturgy the people see the actions of the priest, and the calling down of the Holy Spirit can serve to punctuate the eucharistic narrative and the words of consecration, to distinguish them and make them stand out from the prayers that precede and follow. If the epiclesis is highlighted, it sets the immediate context for the narrative of the Last Supper, which in turn is the setting for the quoted words of Christ and the separate consecration of the bread and wine, the expression of the redemptive Death of Christ, the separation of his Body and Blood. The work of the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit, is thus vividly presented in the Eucharist as it occurs before us here and now.

5. Two Final Points

In the final part of my lecture, I will discuss two points by way of conclusion. My first point returns to the central part of the Eucharistic Prayer, the words and gestures used during the consecration. As we have seen, in this prayer the words of consecration are quoted as the words of Christ himself. It is also true, however, that the gestures that precede these words can also be understood as quoted by the priest. We can also quote the gestures of another person. As St. John Chrysostom says, "The priest lends his tongue and his hands to Christ," and the priest lends his hands to Christ by taking up the bread (and later the chalice), by raising his eyes to heaven, and by bowing as an expression of giving thanks to the Father. These are not the gestures of the priest or even of the Church; they are meant to be the gestures of Christ, just as the words are meant to be the words of Christ. We can make a distinction that will help us understand this point. The priest who is praying the Mass should not be considered to be an actor in a drama. He is not a performer in a play. Rather, he is quoting the actions of Christ. With the Mass now being said before the congregation, there is a temptation for both the priest and the people to think of him as an actor; he is the performer in a depiction of the last supper, and the congregation is like the audience or perhaps it plays

the role of the disciples. But this would be a wrong way to take the role of the priest, and it can lead to an improper way of acting. It draws too much attention to the priest himself. In a drama, the performer is the center of attention; Lawrence Olivier playing Hamlet is at the center of the stage, and the style of his performance is what we admire. The actor comes to the fore. In contrast, the priest should be transparent and the action and words of Christ should come forward. If the priest realizes that he is quoting the gestures of Christ, he acts with the utmost transparency and restraint. His gestures are ritualized; they are subordinated to the liturgy and not displayed for their own sake. Instead of distracting us from the mystery they intensify it.

My second concluding point deals with the manner in which the Mass reenacts the sacrifice of Christ. As we have noted, the Church believes that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, but that it is not different from the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It represents or reenacts that one sacrifice. One of the ways it does so is by consecrating the bread and wine separately, to represent the Death of Jesus, the separation of his body and blood. We are shown that God himself redeemed us by taking on the deepest human suffering, even Death on the cross, and bringing us to a new, resurrected life through it. It is this action of God that we hold onto in life, and the Eucharist makes this saving action of God present and effective for each of us. But the Mass does not represent this sacrifice in the manner of a Passion Play, by depicting those events themselves. It does not picture the suffering and Death of Christ. Rather, it represents them indirectly; it presents the sacrifice of the Cross by going through the Last Supper, when Christ anticipated his own Passion, Death, and Resurrection, and when he spoke about what would happen, accepted it, and made it possible for us to enter into it by way of the Eucharist. Because Christ anticipated his Death and Resurrection, we can look back on it and identify with it. We thus have a complicated, interwoven set of appearances, where we now in our liturgy return to the words and events of the Last Supper, which in turn point us forward to the redemptive Death of Christ, God incarnate. As complex as this is, however, it is not confusing; it resolves itself into the simplicity of God's goodness and the profoundly ingenious way in which God has redeemed us. It is the mystery of faith, *Mysterium fidei*. It elevates our minds as well as our hearts, and it calls forth our liturgical response: "Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free."

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