

The Nonviolent Eucharistic Jesus

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

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

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

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

The Mystery of Holy Thursday
François Mauriac

Outside of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist has no Christian meaning. Everything about it must ultimately be referenced to Him and then through Him to Abba. The same is true of the Christian life. Jesus is the ultimate norm of Christian existence; everything must be referenced to Him. If He is not the final standard against which the Church and the Christian must measure everything in order to determine if it is the will of God or not, then who or what is?

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

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

Among the countless graces I have received this year, perhaps the greatest has been that of being able to grasp in all its fullness the meaning of love... I had striven above all to love God, and in loving Him I discovered the secret of those other words "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father." Jesus made me understand what the will was by the words he used at the Last Supper when He gave His "new commandment" and told His apostles "to love one another as He had loved them"... When God under the old law told His people to love their neighbors as themselves, He had not yet come down to earth. As God knows how much we love ourselves, He could not ask us to do more. But when Jesus gave His apostles a "new commandment, His own commandment," He did not ask only that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, but that we should love them as He loves them and as He will love them to the end of time. O Jesus, I know you command nothing that is impossible... O Jesus ever since its gentle flame has consumed my heart, I have run with delight along the way of your "new commandment."

Now if, as the biblical scholar Fr. John L. McKenzie says, "Jesus' rejection of violence is the clearest of teachings in the New Testament," then that love that is in the Spirit of Christ, that love that is imi-

tative of Christ, that love that is Christ-like, that love that is “as I have loved” is a nonviolent love of friends and enemies.

Both Biblical scholarship and a common sense reading of the Gospel tell us that this New Commandment of Jesus to “love one another as I have loved you,” is not a throwaway line or an arbitrary insertion of a thought into the Gospel. On the contrary, the New Commandment is so placed in the Gospel as to be presented as the supreme and solemn summary of all of Jesus’ teachings and commands. It contains the entire Law of the Gospel (§1970 of the new Catechism). The importance of all this for Eucharistic understanding and Eucharistic unity is this: Jesus’ solemn New Commandment is given and proclaimed not on a mountain top nor in the Temple, but, as St. Thérèse notes, at the Last Supper, the First Eucharist.

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

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

All the major modern divisions in the Church follow by centuries the Church’s justification of violence and homicide with all the distortion of perspective and spirit that persistence in such activities brings to individuals and communities. And after each division all of the churches—minus a few of the ‘Peace Churches’—continued to teach, to endorse and to employ violence and homicide as part of their Christian way. This necessitated that in these churches, or any subdivision thereof, the Eucharistic liturgy be not too explicit in remembering the details of the Gospel-given history of the Lord’s Supper, of the Lord’s Passion and of the Lord’s Death. Less still could any Church that justified and participated in violence and homicide afford to be continually Eucharistically emphatic in remembering Jesus’ New Commandment given at the Last Supper and the clear relationship between it and the way He in fact historically responded to violence and homicide. What one does not underline is what one does not want to remember.

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

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

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

Then He took bread into His holy hands, and looking up to You, almighty God, He gave thanks, blessed it, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said: “Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.”

Likewise, when the Supper was ended, He took the cup. Again He gave You thanks and praise, gave the cup to His disciples and said: “Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.”

“Do this in memory of me.”

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

The explicit inclusion of the memory of Jesus’ New Commandment, Jesus’ rejection of violence, Jesus’ love of enemies, Jesus’ prayer for His persecutors, and Jesus’ return of good for evil in the Eucharistic Prayer of the churches at the point of “institution-anamnesis” is not the addition of a whimsical or arbitrary insertion of haphazard events from Jesus’ life. This is factually what happened from the Cenacle to Calvary. This is the memory given to us by the ultimate historical, theological and pastoral documents on the subject: the four Gospels.

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

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

Jesus did not die of a heart attack. He died when His heart was attacked by human beings inebriated with the diabolical spirit of justified, religiously endorsed homicide—and He died giving a definite, discernible, and consistent response to that satanic spirit. *This reality cannot be insignificant* in discerning the Truth of the revelation God is trying to communicate to humanity for the good of humanity in Jesus. The Sacrifice of the Cross is not about mere animal pain that is meant to assuage

the lust of a sadistic, blood-thirsty, parochial god. It is about the revelation of the nature and meaning and way and power of a Divine Love that saves from an Enemy and a menace that the blackest realities of history can only but hint at. To consistently dismiss and to structurally ignore major facts in the God-given revelatory memory is to assure that little of what God intended to be communicated by this costly revelation will be communicated by it. So while use of the mere words “suffered and died” in the Eucharistic Prayer is theologically exact, pastorally speaking it is emaciated revelatory anamnesis (remembrance).

However, it does not take much reflection to perceive how these detail-devoid Eucharistic Prayers—that do not mention Jesus’ New Commandment given at the Last Supper, that do not mention His rejection of violence, that do not mention His love of even lethal enemies, that do not mention His prayer for persecutors, and His struggle to overcome evil with good—serve a critical function in the life of that form of Christianity that endorses homicide. Intentional forgetfulness, structured inattentiveness, and a cavalier disparaging of Jesus’ teachings of nonviolent love have always been part of its method of operation. Without this cultivated scriptural and liturgical blind spot Jesus could not be drafted as a Divine support person for the home team’s homicide.

It is possible today, as it has been possible for 1700 years, for a normal person to spend a lifetime listening to the Eucharistic Prayers of all of the mainline Christian churches and never apprehend that what is being remembered is a Person—who at the moments being remembered in the Prayers—rejected violence, forgave everyone, prayed for persecutors, returned good for evil. In other words, in most Christian churches, the anamnesis has become an agency for amnesia about truths in the suffering and death of Christ that if consistently brought to consciousness at the sacred time of the community’s Eucharist would stand in judgement on a multitude of community activities, past and present.

As one of the most renowned theologians in the Catholic Church in the 20th Century, Fr. Bernard Haring says, “It is not possible to speak of Christ’s sacrifice while ignoring the role of nonviolence.” Yet this is precisely what most Christian churches have been doing in their Eucharist Prayer since Constantine first employed the cross as an ensign to lead people into the enmity and homicide called war.

The Nonviolent Eucharistic Church

Fact: Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants all believe they have authentic Eucharistic communion within their own churches. This, however, has not prevented them from sojourning into the human bloodletting of their own and other Christians on a grand scale and then exonerating themselves by some fantastic manipulation of the Gospel.

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

This is not one among many things the churches can do for peace and unity—it is what they must do. The present meagerness of scriptural and historical memory, while it does not render the Eucharistic Prayers false, does make them operationally deceptive by omission. Harnessed by nationalisms around the world, Christianity does not actually hear (remember) “suffered and died” as it was in 33 A.D., as it is presented in the Gospels. Pastoral responsibility before God and pastoral integrity before the community insist that the fitting and right textual adjustments be instituted because there is a radical spiritual danger that the “paucis verbis” of the present remembrance in the Eucharistic Prayers of all the mainline churches is serving those forces which the Eucharistic Jesus comes to conquer.

I think it was Archimedes who said that there is a point outside the world that if he could locate it, he could move the world from it. I believe the “institution narrative-anamnesis” of the Eucharistic Prayer of the churches is that spiritual Archimedean point—if the Truth of Christ’s Sacrifice is allowed the fullness of its historical revelatory reality there. It is not magic I speak of here. It is the hidden power of the cross that is released when those who are in Christ respond to the offer of grace through Christ—an offer made through a unique and unequalled “salvation-device” when He said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

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

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

What I am also sure of is this: there is infinitely more to that New Commandment than meets the mind. As each Church Eucharistically remembers more lucidly the truth of Jesus’ life of Nonviolent

Love, His death in Nonviolent Love, and His resurrection through Nonviolent Love, Jesus' New Commandment will disclose its depth of meaning, purpose, and power to the churches of Christianity in a light that will gift them with an experience of new reality. Out of this new reality will come new insight and new spirit; and from this new reality and new insight and new spirit will come the new words, new phraseology, new language, new thoughts that will resolve aged and serious problems of truth. Rising from this new level of Eucharistic fidelity will come a symbiotic synthesis of Christic Love and Truth that will fuse a unity in a manner beyond present imagination. It is not magic I speak of here. Prayer changes people, and people change things, but the "Yes" for a more pastorally accurate remembrance in the Eucharistic Prayer must first be given by pastors. As at Nazareth of old, God holds His breath and awaits His chosen servant's "fiat."

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

In 1969 I lost on all fronts with this. For the conservatives it was "just ridiculous"; for the liberals, it was too absolutist; and for the radicals, it was Christianist and anti-humanist. But I know more surely today than I did almost a quarter of a century ago that this is the truth of the matter. Homicide-justifying Christianity cannot dialogue itself out of the snare into which it has fallen. It must first become obedient to Jesus' New Commandment, then out of obedience will come the grace and insight to do the other tasks committed to the Christian and the Church.

This Christic obedience would seem to mean that the New Commandment to "Love one another as I have loved you" would expect as a dimension of Baptism and Eucharist, the willingness, if called upon to kill other Christians, to universally say: "No! I cannot comply with your order because it would reduce me to a 'Judas-Christian'—a betrayer of the gift of my Baptismal unity in Christ and a betrayer of the task of my Eucharistic unity in His New Commandment."

How could this not be what Jesus intended for His disciples by His New Commandment at the Last Supper? How could this not be what Jesus intended His followers to teach, nurture, encourage, foster, energize, and command when bringing people into Baptismal and Eucharistic unity with Him and through Him with each other and God? The Church will be the servant it is meant to be to humanity only to the extent that it is faithful to what it has been commanded to do internally, namely to "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."

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

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

For mercy's sake, the pastors of Christianity must relinquish their stance of chosen ignorance. They must simply stop managing the Eucharistic Prayer in a manner that spiritually short-circuits the process of repentance—and hence unification—by perpetually camouflaging the unwanted truths of Jesus' nonviolent love and Jesus' command to follow His example of love.

The Eucharist has no Christian meaning outside of Jesus Christ. There are not two Jesus Christs: the Eucharistic Christ of faith on one hand, and the historical Jesus on the other. John Paul II states in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), “One cannot separate Jesus from the Christ or speak of a ‘Jesus of history’ who would differ from the ‘Christ of faith’... Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.” The only Jesus Christ present at the Eucharist, the only Jesus Christ to remember and receive in the Eucharist is the Jesus Christ who taught and lived unto death a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies and who commanded His disciples to “love one another as I have loved you.”

Having recently concluded a Century that has killed more people by rationally justified, religiously legitimized war, revolution, abortion, and capital punishment than all the centuries of humanity combined; having recently concluded a Century that has by the billions mercilessly murdered “the least” (Mt 25:14-46) by squandering on the technology of violence and homicide the most lavish gifts of intelligence and learning ever granted a century of humanity; having recently concluded a Century that has brought a planet of humanity to the lip of a cauldron bubbling with the brew of nuclear plagues and war-generated diseases; having recently concluded a Century where Christianity has been a major player in all these evils—it is demanded that Christian pastors begin to lead their churches away from evasive Eucharistic Prayers and into remembering what God committed to them for salvific and revelatory remembrance on Holy Thursday-Good Friday, 33 A.D.

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

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

(Rev) Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

**FOR PRINTED COPIES OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:
CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN NONVIOLENCE
167 FAIRHILL DRIVE
WILMINGTON, DE 19808-4312
PHONE: 302-235-2925
FAX: 302-235-2926
E-MAIL: JJCARMODY@COMCAST.NET**