

# The Eucharist 5

The Practice of  
Reservation.

Barriers to  
Intercommunion.

Conclusion: The Eucharist.

# **The Practice of Reservation**

# Practice of Reservation

- Practice of Reservation of the Sacrament
  - A divisive subject for Catholics and Protestants
  - Some of the consecrated bread and wine may be left over after a Eucharist and “reserved”
    - Used for the later Communion of the sick and home-bound
    - Used as a focus for later private or corporate devotion

# Practice of Reservation

## History

- Justin Martyr (100-165):
  - Deacons took Eucharistic bread to those who were absent
    - The ill
    - Slaves who could not get to church
    - Prisoners
  - Several days might pass before the consecrated bread could be delivered

# Practice of Reservation

## History

- Tertullian (155-220)
  - Christians desired frequent communion, but persecution limited Eucharistic services
  - Christians began keeping some consecrated bread and wine
    - at home
    - on their person

# Practice of Reservation

## History

- Irenaeus (~150 to ~200), Bishop of Lyons:
  - Bishops sent pieces of consecrated bread from the main diocesan church to all the parish churches
    - Sign that there is really but One Church and One Eucharist (*spatial* continuity)
    - Perhaps also a sign of the bishop's jurisdiction
  - Bishops kept pieces of the consecrated bread in the main diocesan church from one Eucharist to the next
    - Sign of *temporal* continuity

# Practice of Reservation

## History

- Consecrated elements were treated with great, perhaps superstitious reverence
- Hippolytus (170-235), *Apostolic Traditions*: if consecrated bread kept at home:
  - Must not be allowed to fall
  - Must not get lost
  - Must be protected against mice
- Ancient sources tell of a third century Christian rebuked for carrying the consecrated bread with him to the circus (unseemly locale)

# Practice of Reservation

## History

- Middle Ages: Adoration of God as present in the consecrated bread and wine
  - Elevation of the host and chalice
    - Originally one elevation, at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer (“... By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.”)
    - 1200’s: two additional elevations added
      - Words of institution over the bread
      - Words of institution over the wine

# Practice of Reservation

## History

- Adoration of God as present in the consecrated bread and wine
  - Service of Benediction after the Eucharist
  - Genuflecting before the “reserved” host in the tabernacle
  - Corpus Christi procession: the “reserved” host is paraded in a corporate “extra-liturgical” devotion

**What do these  
practices imply about  
the nature of the  
Eucharist?**

# Practice of Reservation

## Theology

- Implications about the Real Presence of Jesus. Was the change of bread and wine into the real Presence of Jesus, body and blood, a:
  - ***Permanent change*** in some objective reality? (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican view)
  - ***Impermanent change*** in some objective reality, a change that exists only with the physical presence of a Eucharistic community and the proclamation of the Eucharistic words? (the Lutheran view)

# Practice of Reservation

## Theology

- Taking the consecrated bread and wine to the ill and shut-ins
  - Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans: they receive the body and blood of Christ
  - Lutherans: they receive the body and blood of Christ *if* the distribution is accompanied by Eucharistic prayers and a small Eucharistic community
  - Protestants who do not believe in the “real presence” (= there is *no* change in the bread and wine in some objective reality): it’s just bread and wine. Could be symbolic part of a small prayer service

# Practice of Reservation

## Theology

- Using the “reserved” consecrated bread and wine as a focus for private or corporate devotion
  - Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans: theologically justifiable
  - Lutherans: it’s just bread and wine in the absence of a Eucharistic Community and Eucharistic Prayers, and hence it’s – idolatry!
  - Protestants who don’t believe in the Real Presence: it’s just bread and wine, period, and hence it’s – idolatry!

# Practice of Reservation

## Theology

- Using the “reserved” consecrated bread and wine as a focus for private or corporate devotion
  - Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans: theologically justifiable
    - Catholics: devotion to the reserved elements at times has been almost a cult
    - Orthodox: have reverence for the reserved elements, but few devotions (perhaps because of iconography)
    - Anglicans: some find spiritual value in the consecrated elements reserved in a tabernacle

# Practice of Reservation

## Theology

**“The tabernacle on the altar or the aumbry set into the wall, veiled and with a light burning perpetually in front of it, is a most powerful symbol of Christ’s abiding presence. No doubt there is a temptation to linger there, as Mary of Bethany lingered, listening to the teachings of Jesus while her sister Martha got on with the work. The church will always have activists and contemplatives, and it needs both. . .”**

- Macquarrie, p. 154

# Practice of Reservation

## Theology

**“It is as impossible for devout faith, contemplating Christ in this sacrament, as it is for a loving mother, looking earnestly at her child, not to love it. The mother’s consciousness of her love, and her outward manifestation of it, may vary; scruples, interruptions, bewilderments may occur; but there it is in her heart, you cannot suppress it. So must there be special adoration and worship in the heart of everyone seriously believing a special, mysterious, presence, of Christ, God, and man, expressed by the words, ‘This is my body’.**

- John Keble (1792-1866). *On Eucharistic Adoration* (Professor of Poetry, Oxford University, member of the “Oxford Movement” of Anglican history)

# Intercommunio

# Intercommunion

- Differing views on the Practice of “Reservation” has been a major problem in achieving intercommunion among Christians

# Intercommunion

- Differences in the three main theologies on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist:
  - **1.** Real Presence involves a *permanent change* in some objective reality (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican view)
  - **2.** Real Presence is an *impermanent change* in some objective reality, a change that exists only with the physical presence of a Eucharistic community and the proclamation of the Eucharistic words (the Lutheran view)
  - **3.** There is no Real Presence. There is *no change* in any objective reality (strict Calvinist view)

**What might the various denominations have to do to achieve Intercommunion?**

# Intercommunion

- **“Catholics must curb the cult of the elements outside the Eucharist (e.g. the Corpus Christi procession, the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament), even though its legitimacy follows from Catholics’ present understanding of consecration and presence.”**

**Robert W. Jenson, “The Supper”, in Christian Dogmatics, Braaten and Jenson et. al. Fortress Press, 1984 (standard Lutheran theology textbook)**

# Intercommunion

- **“Lutherans must adopt ceremonially respectful ways of either preserving remaining elements for the next celebration or of finishing them all within one celebration, even though by Lutheran present understanding of consecration and presence there is only bread and wine outside the Eucharistic action proper.”**

Robert W. Jenson, “The Supper”, in *Christian Dogmatics*, Braaten and Jenson et. al. Fortress Press, 1984 (standard Lutheran theology textbook)

# Intercommunion

- **“And Calvinists must cease to inflict on Catholic and Lutheran visitors formulas of thanksgiving and distribution that suggest the absence of Christ’s body, even though these may be the fullest liturgical formulas for what Calvinists now think to be the case.”**

**Robert W. Jenson, “The Supper”, in Christian Dogmatics, Braaten and Jenson et. al. Fortress Press, 1984 (standard Lutheran theology textbook)**

# Intercommunion

- Second major barrier to intercommunion:  
differing attitudes to the **Eucharist** and **unity**:
  - Sharing the Eucharist is a *sign* of unity (Catholics and Orthodox)
  - Sharing the Eucharist is a *means* of unity (Anglicans and Protestants)

# **Conclusion: The Eucharist**

# Conclusion: The Eucharist

- The basis of the sacraments is a respect for matter as:
  - A creation of God: “fearfully and wonderfully made”
  - A reality God has used in the unfolding of God’s creation

# Conclusion: The Eucharist de Chardin's Hymn to Matter

“I bless you, matter, and you I acclaim; not as the pontiffs of science or the moralizing preachers depict you, debased, disfigured, a mass of brute forces and brute appetites, but as you reveal yourself to me today, in your totality and your true nature. I acclaim you as the inexhaustible potentiality for existence and transformation. I acclaim you as the universal power which brings together and unites. I acclaim you as the melodious fountain of water from which spring the souls of men. I acclaim you as the divine *milieu*, charged with creative power, as the ocean stirred by the Spirit, as the clay molded and infused by the incarnate Word.”

- Teilhard de Chardin

# Conclusion: The Eucharist

- It is the material world as described and celebrated in de Chardin's hymn,
- a world charged with divine glory,
- that makes it conceivable that bread could become:
  - a shrine of the presence of Jesus Christ,
  - the bread of God for us, which comes down from heaven to give life to the world
- (however we explain the reality of that presence: transubstantiation, consubstantiation, transignification, transfinalization ...)

# Conclusion: The Eucharist

- George Macleod, a Scottish Churchman, watched ships from the Americas bringing wheat into Liverpool harbor, and found it profound to reflect that each of the grains of wheat had the potential to become the body of Christ

# Primary Reference

- **A Guide to the Sacraments**, John Macquarrie, Chapter 14. Continuum Publishing, New York, 1997