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TOWARD A EUCHARISTIC GATHERING: THE EFFICACY AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOVERY OF THE GREAT TRADITION AT FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY WORSHIP CENTER

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TOWARD A EUCHARISTIC GATHERING: THE EFFICACY AND IMPLICATIONS OF
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WORSHIP CENTER

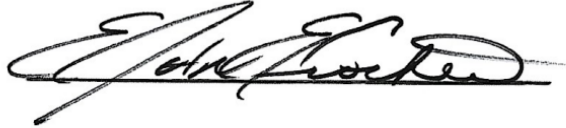
A PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
ERNEST CROCKER
FALL 2023

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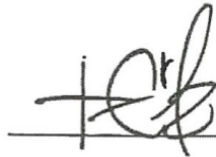
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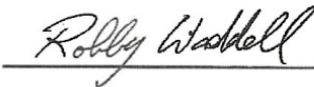
under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Committee and approved by all members of the Committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the Barnett College of Ministry and Theology of Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.

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May 3, 2024



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ABSTRACT

While humankind not only has to eat to survive but also enjoys eating, the church, which shares this same need to survive, has, in some cases, found itself in a forced fast. This forced fasting, often justified by 'biblical' reasons, can significantly hinder the church's spiritual formation, leaving worshippers deficient in their spiritual journey. Promoting a more balanced approach to spiritual discipline is crucial, as using Scripture to justify this fast is counter to the words of Christ, the teachings of the apostles, and the church's mind for over two millennia. It's important to note that from Pentecost to the present, the rhythm of the church has been Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Sacramental, reinforcing the argument for a more balanced approach to spiritual discipline. The preached word in the Spirit's witness is the ground of the worshipping community. However, out of that same preached word of God is the vital place of not forgetting to share the body and blood of Christ at the Lord's Table; therefore, let us keep the feast.

Dedication

The Lord is my Shepherd; I will not want for anything.

Acknowledgment

A special thank you to my wife, Janielle, and children, Jada, Jeremiah, and Jonathan, who prayed and covered me with their unending love, support, and patience. Also, thank you to my parents, Dr. John and Theresa Crocker, for encouraging me when my tank was low.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

Introduction of the Project

In His final evening meal (Passover) with his disciples, Jesus instructed them to continue at the Table in this new covenant, in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of Him (Luke 22:19-20). Jesus's archetype of fellowship at the Table carried many themes that bring His message and aim (*telos*) into a synthesis: His body and blood are true food and drink, realized in eating bread and drinking wine (John 6:55). By the revelation of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul shares with the Corinthian Church what Christ handed down to him: to continue partaking of the Lord's body and blood until the Lord's return (1 Cor 11:23-26). The institution of the Holy Eucharist did not cease with the revelation to Paul and his transmission of the faith to the Corinthian believers. Christ has not returned yet; therefore, this church tradition should be part of the animation and embodiment of the church. The church traditions are not antiquated practices that died with the Church Fathers, but they are the living faith of those who transmitted what the Lord once handed down to them. Hence, how is the recovery of the Holy Eucharist in Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center significant to the growth and formation of the church?

Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center (FHCWC) was not always known by this name. Before bearing the aforementioned name, the church was known as Friendship "Missionary" Baptist Church (FBC). However, it had no official ties or commitment to the Southern Baptist or National Baptist organizations, but it was an independent Baptist church. The name change resulted from a shift in the ministry's mission and vision, along with a release in the witness of the Holy Spirit. FBC was introduced to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit due to a series of

services commonly called a revival. Out of the series of services, the ministry turned towards operating in the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12). Before this shift in the ministry, the manifestation of the Spirit seemed to be understood as only an emotional response to some external stimuli, from a song or excited preaching. The name was also changed because the church was not under any formal Baptist organization. My father, who was the pastor at the time, understood Baptist organizations as not being very welcoming to the operation and expressions of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, wanting to release the church from any branding that did not adequately represent the ministry, the name was changed to Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center.

Friendship Baptist Church was initially organized by a small contingent of people who migrated from the Deep South of Mississippi. This small group was knowledgeable of a church setting that reflected a liturgy and the beliefs of a Baptist church. The traditions of FBC were rooted in a Baptist framework resembling a community of people who were also at ease within a Baptist context. By traditions, it is meant that FBC was accustomed to understanding baptism, holy communion, and any other practice of the church as being Baptist and not related to the historicity of the church universal. FBC and the people who "started" the church did not share in the catholicity of the historic church, nor were they interested in a more global church experience outside of the Baptist context. Being "Baptist" was equivalent to being Christian, and nothing more was necessary outside of being Baptist.

Being Baptist, however, does not mean that Baptists did not celebrate holy communion. Baptists have historically partaken in holy communion and carried out baptism, which they consider an ordinance. The Baptist understanding of holy communion does not entirely align with the historicity of the church as it is a sacrament or mystery. Baptism in FBC was performed after candidates accepted Christ in their lives, and then they participated in Communion. Holy

Communion was celebrated regularly on the first Sunday until it was moved to only once a year because it was perceived as only “religiously” embraced and without understanding its deeper meaning to the participants. After holy communion was moved to once a year in the life of FHCWC, it remained until the appointment of the new senior pastor. Presently, FHCWC is sharing in holy eucharist every first Sunday, with the future intention to be celebrated at least twice a month. Along with being enjoyed at least twice a month, FHCWC follows a divine liturgy as the pattern in worship during the holy eucharist. FHCWC now defines the holy eucharist as a church sacrament or mystery, not an ordinance. Within FHCWC and within this project, holy communion and holy eucharist are used as interchangeable terms.

Regarding eucharistic worship, since Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center has not faithfully practiced the holy eucharist, the worshipping community is short in realizing the whole gospel. The Word, the Spirit, and the Lord's Table form a threefold cord (Eccl 4:12b) of fellowship that enters the worshipping community into a perichoresis (dance or rotation) of unity and love. In his book *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should be All Three*, Gordon T. Smith raises a position about the church and why it should be evangelical, Pentecostal, and sacramental, all together. The church is evangelical because the Bible is the center of the beliefs of the church, and Pentecostal because the church was birthed in the power and witness of the Spirit, and also sacramental because Christ instituted holy eucharist to be shared in the fellowship of the church. Smith posits that "All three, taken together, are the means by which the benefits of the cross are known and experienced. The three —Spirit, along with the Word and sacrament—are then the means by which the intent of the cross is fulfilled in the life

of the Church, the means by which we abide in Christ and Christ abides in us.”¹ As the Spirit, the Word, and the sacrament harmonize, they mirror the testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, fulfilled in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:7-8), and witness the unity of the church in all three. However, the church is not to consider these streams apart from one another to be grasped by certain pockets of the church, as if they are options within the history of the church. According to the Acts 2 witness, the church does not promote being distinctly divided on the issue of being scripturally rooted, birthed, and animated by the Holy Spirit and sacramentally involved at the Table of the Lord. Embedded within the first five to seven centuries after the church's inception at Pentecost, the church maintained the position of being evangelical, Pentecostal, and sacramental while not considering them as independent of one or the other. Following the Acts 2 model, the church continued in the apostles' teaching and breaking bread through the witness of the Spirit.

The holy eucharist can be considered a recapitulation of the preached Word, in action, by eating and drinking the consecrated bread and wine. The restatement of the preached Word, however, is not merely recalling what was said in a sermon. The holy eucharist, entailing the various elements used during the liturgy, are the symbols through which anamnesis (the remembrance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection) comes alive by the witness of the Spirit. The Word, the Spirit, and the Table of the Lord encourage a complete Christian experience as the church eats together.

The intention of this work is to rekindle the dance of unity within the church by inviting the worshiping community back to the Lord's Table to eat Christ's flesh and drink Christ's

¹ Gordon T. Smith. *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal: Why the Church Should Be All Three* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 21.

blood, as He instituted. Eating Christ's body and drinking His blood discharges the healing properties of the life of His Spirit to all who partake (John 6:53). FHCWC, which is historically Baptist, still carries some Baptist ideologies about holy communion and can only be challenged through biblical teaching and practical applications. Hopeful outcomes for this project are to re-establish a need for the sacrament of holy eucharist to be practiced regularly by the Church and, through specific testing of the practice, highlight the formative witness of fellowship through eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ at the Table of the Lord.

Rationale for the Project

This project aims to highlight the vital place of the Eucharist in the life of the community of the Church. Based on the words of Christ at what is commonly called the Last Supper, Jesus instructs His disciples to “do this in remembrance of [Him],” sharing bread and wine, which are His body and blood (Luke 22:19b). Sharing in the spirit of the text, Gordon T. Smith agrees that, “We need to come to the table regularly, when we feel like it and when we don't, for the danger is that we should forget.”² For Smith, the lack of practicing the Table, eating the body, and drinking the blood of Christ endangers the church of forgetting the witness of the Table, the message it preaches, and the awareness of what the church community embodies in sharing at the Table. In line with the institution of the Eucharist, the historic church continues to celebrate the feast regularly. In his attempt to connect the necessity of the Eucharist to the church in a modern setting, Hans Boersma asserts that the “Postmodern apprehension of essentialism, along with a

² Gordon T. Smith, *A Holy Meal: The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 42.

suspicion of absolute truth claims, is affecting younger evangelicals' willingness to stand by the rational apologetics and theological edifices erected by a previous generation."³ For Boersma, the postmodern "abandonment of a pre-modern sacramental mindset"⁴ has left a part of the church flat in appreciating a more robust presence of Christ in the Eucharist and in a global context of His presence in the church community, engaging its surrounding. The church is not consuming a symbol of Christ's body and blood, but consistent with the great tradition, is consuming and transmitting the very life of Christ within the church and to the world.

When engaging the elements at the Table, the church community will both handle and taste the Lord. Furthermore, the Table of the Lord is a constant recapitulation of the gospel witness, expressing the mission and life of Christ, as His body and blood were offered as the salvific act of the grace of God. While lifting the mind of the church as handed down by Christ to His apostles, along with retracing the steps of the first seven centuries of the church and its understanding of the Holy Eucharist, this project attempts to deepen the connection of FHCWC with the rich heritage of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

The objective of this work is to understand that the aforementioned great tradition includes the holy eucharist, with baptism falling underneath its umbrella, thereby covering the universal church. The great tradition embraces other mysteries of the church, such as confession, absolution, and marriage, but they are not the mysteries or sacraments this work is concerned with.

³ Hans Boersma. "The Eucharist Makes the Church." *Crux* 44, no. 4 (2008): 2–11. 2.

⁴ Boersma, "The Eucharist Makes the Church," 2.

Topic Relationship to the Ministry of the Student

Fellowship with the intent of building stronger relationships is a factor within the ministry of Jesus that attracted people to His person and ministry. Jesus welcomed people at His Table who were commonly ostracized from eating with rabbis (Mark 2:15-16). However, Jesus's invitation to dine with Him was not a mere setting to eat and drink but served as a witness for His ministry of healing and the gift of salvation (Mark 2:17).

I have been serving in ministry at FHCWC for nineteen years and have, within the last thirteen years, been gradually taking over the assignment of Senior Pastor. As the Senior Pastor, the vision and mission are to form Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center into a haven of sacramental worship in accordance with the great tradition. The great tradition can be defined as the faithful and historical transmission of the Church's doctrine and worship as shown through Scripture, creeds, councils, and the writings of the Fathers. Understanding the great tradition will encourage the church to stand in the faith that has been believed everywhere, always, and by all. FHCWC will seek to develop an atmosphere and environment for people who are responsive to the Spirit, responsible with the Scriptures, and a people with an appetite to share in fellowship with the global worshipping community at the Lord's Table. Through this formation process at FHCWC, this research aims to create a manual detailing the benefits of forming a sacramentally minded church and how the church grows through the Spirit, the Word, and the Table. The manual will not only serve as the ground for the formation process of FHCWC, but the manual will be made available for other ministries seeking to form their adherents in the way of the Spirit, the Word, and the Table.

Contextual Scope and Limitations

The sampling group, size, and demographics limit the scope of the research. The project research was conducted at Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center in Rochester, New York. The focus group was for those actively serving in the ministry. The limited focus group size was fifteen people; however, the group varies in age and experience in Church. The participants within the focus group will be pastors, deacons, ministry overseers, and laity who have become familiar with orthodoxy. FHCWC is a non-denominational church with Baptist roots. FHCWC is a church made up of an Afro-Latino community. The church's Black population is Baptist in origin, while the Latino community has a Roman Catholic background.

The project methodology will be qualitative, not quantitative. Though there will be a focus group and an electronic survey used to capture the experiences and feedback of the participants, the data acquired will not be for statistical data analysis purposes. However, the survey findings will communicate the implications of sharing in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

This project aims to demonstrate the correlation between the significance of the Holy Eucharist and the vitality of worship in the formation of the church. Baptism is a peripheral topic raised in this project study. Though not a main consideration for this study, baptism is part of recovering the great tradition in the church and is commonly coupled with the eucharistic celebration.

Research Question and Anticipated Results

How is the recovery of the Holy Eucharist in Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center significant to the growth and spiritual formation of the Church?

The aim of this project is that through the online survey, focus group, and active formation sessions at the church, participants and potential participants will see the value of sharing at the Lord's Table as part of their spiritual formation, along with the preached Word and the witness of the Spirit. Furthermore, this project could serve as the ground for other churches desiring to reintroduce the Lord's Table into their liturgy, hoping for more profound spiritual formation. The anticipated results from the research include a comprehensive theological and biblical foundation for Christ's institution of the Eucharist to His apostles and the church. The project anticipates being a framework for educating and developing ministry leaders who need to contextualize the Eucharist for their church and evaluate its efficacy within that context.

Project Goals and Objectives

The general goal of this project is to determine the level of knowledge of Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center about the significance of sharing in the Holy Eucharist and its formative witness in the life of the church. The subsequent goals of this project will communicate with the general goal. The first objective is to highlight the historical roots of the church through historical orthodoxy in relation to the Holy Eucharist. Defining significant words that are common within orthodoxy will serve as the scriptural and historic ground for the project. The term orthodoxy (unless otherwise noted) will be defined as “integrated biblical teaching as

interpreted in its most consensual classic period”⁵ within the Church's first seven centuries, including its councils, creeds, and writings of the Fathers. Through the first objective, the research seeks to determine if the church practices and understands aspects of the historic church as part of its spiritual formation. The second objective is to demonstrate how orthodoxy communicates with FHCWC through the Holy Eucharist, acting as the bridge that links orthodoxy to orthopraxy. The research is not only concerned with the head knowledge of the church relative to the Eucharist but seeks the embodiment of that knowledge made evident in the life of the church. The third objective is to extend the gospel witness beyond the pulpit and Table. Along with preaching the Word and sharing the elements during the Holy Eucharist, the witness of the Spirit is to incarnate the body and blood of Christ beyond the church context. Therefore, the research will seek to unpack the historic understanding of the Eucharist in the great tradition and its formational impact on the church. The recovery of the great tradition, as a whole, is not the aim of this project. The sacrament of Holy Eucharist is part of the great tradition and should be understood as distinct from the total corpus of the great tradition. In this way, the Eucharist should be realized in this project.

Building a robust vocabulary about the Holy Eucharist in the great tradition is vital to understanding it and its contribution to the church. Within the heritage of orthodoxy are the traditions of the church and how they communicate with Scripture. The church's traditions do not erase nor contradict Scripture but yield a more colorful picture of the history of the church and how the church is contextualized throughout history. Therefore, without understanding the terms of orthodoxy, how the historical roots of the church communicate with FHCWC will not be

⁵ Thomas Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2003) 29.

realized. The goals of this objective are to form a church that speaks and understands the orthodox sacramental tradition of the Holy Eucharist and to form a church that is familiar with the history of the church and realizes that its roots run more profoundly than the history of FHCWC.

Being able to demonstrate how the historical root of orthodoxy creates a discourse between the historic church and FHCWC through the sacraments, specifically the Holy Eucharist, encourages a liturgy that is more Christocentric in its worship and ecclesial in its expression to rehearse the message and mission of the Lord (1 Cor 11:26). Through the focus group and formation sessions, which intend to deepen the historical base of FHCWC through the Holy Eucharist, the Church will be challenged to expand the borders of its understanding and better define who is welcome at Christ's Table. The research intends to gather the church to the Table where the life of Christ is rehearsed and where the church is called to remember His sacrifice. Connecting FHCWC to the historical practice and mind of the church through the Eucharist, the research seeks to deepen the church's relationship with Christ through the witness of the Spirit.

Extending the gospel beyond the pulpit is the allure of the Lord's Table and why His church should often eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. The third objective is to move from an informative sphere of ecclesiology toward embodying the witness of the Lord's Table by living out Christ's broken body and poured out blood. Since Christ came as the gift of salvation to the world (John 3:16), the Lord takes form in each participant by living in and through them, engaging the context of each participant who shares in the Holy Eucharist. Establishing a manual that moves from intelligence to ingestion to incarnation can serve as a resource for FHCWC and other churches in the ongoing spiritual formation of the church.

Summary

Jesus's last act with His apostles was a sharing of fellowship, the Pascha meal, that ended in instituting the Holy Eucharist. Jesus's final command to His apostles was for the *koinonia* of the Holy Eucharist to continue until He returns. This project intends to revisit the command of Christ to His church to share in the eucharistic meal while embracing the formative nature of the message of Christ presented at the Table. While in concert with the Spirit and the Word, this project will attempt to detail the centrality of the Holy Eucharist to FHCWC. Furthermore, while understanding the significance of the Holy Eucharist in FHCWC, this project will attempt to highlight the witness of Christ at His Table through FHCWC to the church's context.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROJECT IN PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

From the beginning, humankind was given the command to eat. The command of God to the first parents guided their eating habits,⁶ and their disobedience resulted in separation from Him.

However, the Lord has been seeking fellowship with humankind through the table since the fall, as in the case of Abraham (Gen 18). If eating serves as the ground for humankind's separation from the Lord, then eating also serves as the bridge to restoring fellowship with Him.

Eating is a means to sustain life. All living beings, in one way or another, eat to live. God assigned eating in Genesis as a means to sustain life by giving certain foods to humankind to eat. Pregnant within the God-given appetite of humanity were natural and spiritual parameters. The Genesis account captures man and woman breaking God's law while eating the forbidden fruit, resulting in death (Gen 2:17). Death, however, is not intended to hold humankind captive when the Lord offers Himself as life-giving food. While contemplating His service to humanity in the wilderness, the evil one tempted Jesus to turn a stone into bread, but Jesus's rejection of this suggestion by Satan allowed Christ to declare later Himself to be the bread of life, that self-same bread that supplied life to those in the wilderness with Moses and would continue to come down from heaven to give life to the world (John 6:33). Christ asserts that He is the embodiment of the realized bread in the wilderness, and "He calls this the 'true bread,' not because the miracle of

⁶ Gen 2:16. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced employ the *New Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

the manna was false but because it was a type and not the very truth itself.”⁷ The bread in the wilderness was not Christ because the Hebrews died after eating that bread. Christ, while connecting Himself with the bread in the wilderness, asserts that He is Bread but of the sort that transmits eternal life (John 6:58). Even so, the bread that Jesus hands over to His disciples during their final meal in the Upper Room, He does in the wake of a new Passover wherein the bread is His body and the wine is His blood.

During the final Passover meal, Jesus instituted a new Passover in the Eucharist shared by the believing faithful in His Church for over two millennia. Brant Pitre asserts that Christ is the new Passover that “has been sacrificed; therefore, Christians must keep the new Passover ‘feast’ of his body and blood.”⁸ The ritual meal of the Jewish Seder and the Christian Eucharist is an invitation to a community of people who are tethered by common interests that are practiced at the table. Eating bread, drinking wine, and prayers of thanksgiving for deliverance from bondage and sin harmonize the Jewish and Christian communities in worshipping God. Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy attest that “The meals, more or less formally, establish the community”⁹ and remind that community what and in whom they believe. Christ’s words at the table with his apostles to “do this in *anamnesis* of me” (Luke 22:19) turned the emphasis from the Passover meal to the establishment of the Eucharist. Attention was no longer placed on the act of God’s deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt but on Jesus, who was the fulfillment of

⁷ Joel C. Elowsky and Thomas C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: John 1-10* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 224.

⁸ Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Image, 2016), 76.

⁹ Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy, *Christian Symbol and Ritual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 30.

every type and shadow of the Old Testament witness. From then onward, along with the words of institution, the apostles safeguarded what would become known as Holy Eucharist, handing it down to the Church. James F. White, while expressing that the Eucharist is the central habit of the Church, asserts that “the eucharist is a repeated experience of God’s self giving that Christians observe from baptism until death. It is also the most direct experience that we have of God’s self giving.”¹⁰ Jesus’s command was to perform the fellowship and sharing of His flesh and blood at the table, revealed through bread and wine. Through the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, the flesh and blood of Jesus are consumed, and the Church experiences this holy mystery through the witness of the Spirit in obedience to the words of Christ, and thus eternal life (John 6:54).

Eating

One of the most basic means to sustain human life is through eating. If the human body is deprived of nourishment, whether solid or liquid, it will not maintain or support the bodily functions necessary to live. Biologically, God has designed the human body to use food for fuel and to sustain life. Food directly impacts the feeder, whose existence responds to what is ingested. Specifically, the brain temporarily reacts to eaten food, sending signals to the rest of the body through the blood. Though different sections of the brain respond uniquely to ingested food, both positive and negative manifestations show up in blood labs and highlight the history of a person’s eating.¹¹ Eating has an impact beyond the moment of ingestion that can have long-

¹⁰ James F. White, *Sacraments as God’s Self Giving* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 52.

¹¹ Yijun Liu, Gao Jia-Hong, Ho-Ling Liu, and Peter T. Fox, “The Temporal Response of the Brain after Eating Revealed by Functional MRI,” *Nature* 405, no. 6790: 1058-62, [https:// doi.org/ 10.1038/35016590](https://doi.org/10.1038/35016590).

term effects on the human experience. Eating can be detailed as a formative encounter with the food ingested. Therefore, eating is not simply an event that satisfies at the moment of consumption, but it can detail the history and future health of the consumer.

Food not only supports human life but aids in the ability of humankind to discern context. Food engages and opens people to familiar and unfamiliar contexts through the human senses. Food is a means by which humanity takes in the world around them and becomes aware of their environment. The human experience is hardly lived without a context or community, and multiple variables impact formation within that community, including food. Giselle Weiss asserts that the sensory organs are perceptive and connected to the world in a way that helps humankind to understand its surroundings. From the five senses, she continues, the brain is triggered, and the experience is shaped through the sensory signals the brain has received.¹² For Weiss, each sensory organ interprets what it experiences differently, but the encounter crafts a world or context that can be more clearly realized. With that realized context comes various experiences and eclectic people seeking to appreciate their shared contexts without discrediting another. Food and its physiological persuasion on the human experience pull the consumer toward the table to share in the variety of the context. Therefore, food and the table do not represent the place to segregate but enforce a sense of continuity within diversity.

Some people side with the thought that food carries an essence that segregates one group from another and better defines the cultural landscape of each group while creating a gulf between those groups.¹³ This perspective aims to segregate at the table while raising the matter

¹² Giselle Weiss, "A Feast for the Senses," *Lancet* 359, no. 9312: 1161, [https:// doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(02\)08166-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08166-7).

¹³ Rachel Slocum, "Race in the Study of Food," *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 3: 305, [https:// doi.org/10.1177/0309132510378335](https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132510378335).

of diversity to further racial divides by highlighting the variants as points that are racially obvious and not humanly common. Rachel Slocum posits that race, racism, and food are interwoven in societal constructs.¹⁴ Based on where food is grown, where it is sold, and who has access to it, it determines if there is equity for all, including non-white groups. Though she asserts that race is a fictional social construction, food has been used as a point to demonize and degrade other non-white people groups rather than to appreciate the identity of those people groups. Based on her research, food identifies people groups as a point to emphasize their culture and habits, though her study of food also found gross racism and disparities that highlight a global issue. Instead of food being used to be communally divisive, it should be considered an avenue to appreciate and identify the history, habits, and contextual understanding of people groups that are white and non-white, respectively.

For the African American community, the context for this particular work, food tells a story with rich historical implications. For the Africans transplanted to America, food tells the story of kidnapping, slavery, violence, cruel and unusual punishment, and the story of resistance towards a system of inhumane and vile oppression. Though the eras of slavery and Jim Crow were repugnant and still leave a foul taste in the mouth of Black American history, the pain of the abuse and disregard for the value of the Black life lost its potency when it was time to eat. Catherine Armstrong notes in her studies that life around food suspended the time of harsh treatment among Black Americans and pushed them into a state of strong community and safety among one another. Armstrong also noted from her studies of former slave narratives that the time of eating was also a show of resistance and defiance of the surrounding inequalities within

¹⁴ Slocum, "Race in the Study of Food," 305.

society. She states, “The realm of food is one in which the enslaved wilfully acted as a separate unit from the white plantation household and this separation was celebrated.”¹⁵

Food innately has history, purpose, meaning, and a story that links the individual to a community broader than themselves but also to a community that forms them. Jean Royer attests that “personal identity, well-being, affirmation, and confirmation come to people within the context of meals.”¹⁶ The message within the food is older (contextually) than the consumer and has told a story that unfolds an individual’s reality and how they engage their context. John the Baptist, commonly associated with eating honey and wild locusts, is connected to the community and context of the Essenes. Biblical scholar James H. Charlesworth is among other scholars who connect the diet of John the Baptist with the Essene community.¹⁷ John is known for what he ate, which directly linked him to a community of people beyond himself with a unique ethos that attracted others to his table. Though the intent was not to celebrate John, as His message was detailed, his table enabled humankind to experience God through his diet and message. Therefore, food presents its own context, pulling the consumer into its world and allowing the consumer to reap the benefits of the life of the food that is ingested. Conversely, the consumer puts food into their world, integrating the context of the food into their human reality and embodying its life. The consumer becomes the fruit of the food, representing the story, history,

¹⁵ Catherine Armstrong, “Black Foodways and Places: The Didactic Epistemology of Food Memories in the WPA Narratives,” *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 3: 615, [https:// doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2020.1861910](https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2020.1861910).

¹⁶ Jean Royer, “The Sabbath, Passover, and Eucharistic Meals: Sources of Religious Identity,” *Sisters Today* 51, no. 8: 513. <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu/idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=1sdar&AN=ATLAI FZK170613003215&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁷ James A. Kelhoffer, “Did John the Baptist Eat like a Former Essene?: Locust-Eating in the Ancient Near East and at Qumran,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 11, no. 3:293-314, [https:// doi.org/10.1163/1568517042643756](https://doi.org/10.1163/1568517042643756).

and reality of the food consumer, expressing its message and witness to the consumer community.

Eating in the Scriptures

As already alluded to above, the Genesis account of humankind eating ended in separation from God and the spiral downward into death within the human reality. Humanity, though tainted by the fall, has never lost its God-established hunger nor its need to eat. Alexander Schmemmann rightly states that humanity's natural inclination is to eat as eating creatures.¹⁸ Eating is normal. God also prescribed what humankind should eat to satisfy the hunger He placed within them. Principally, eating certain foods (properly or improperly) is the first commandment (before the Decalogue) given to humankind. Coupled with the first commandment, humankind is instructed to eat, with a prohibition, to avoid death. In the Garden, humankind was to eat from any tree except for the tree resting in the center of the Garden (Gen 2:17). God gave the first humans a command to eat, not merely to sustain their lives but to have the life that maintains the structure of the relationship between God and humankind. The command seems beyond the *typical* reason for eating, and God details that the day they eat from the tree in the center of the Garden, they would experience death, which was foreign to the first humans. Though the physical death took many years after the rebellion, the loss of spiritual communion and fellowship with God were immediately felt. The atypical result of dying when eating introduced a spiritual dimension into

¹⁸ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2018), 8.

the typical order of ingesting food that still impacts the human experience, yet the Lord still calls humanity to eat from His table.

Eating from a table the Lord offers has far-reaching expectations that extend beyond the human belly to a spiritual dimension. Throughout the Scriptures, eating is a significant feature that has carried various meanings but none like a covenant relationship between two parties. Sharing a meal is an intimate time to connect with God and the context (people). Regarding the Passover meal and Eucharist, Jean Royer asserts that “ritual meals, whether Jewish or Christian, are vital to the preservation and continuity of religious worship, personal and communal identity, family unity, and community cohesiveness.”¹⁹ For Royer, eating has a unifying essence that tells a story, not a divisive nature that robs people of their identity and dignity. Eating is consistent with the Pauline thought of fellowship or communion concerning Eucharist. Francis J. Moloney extends the Pauline concept of *koinonia* as not only fellowship with God through the elements at Eucharist but including a “common union” with those who are partaking of the body and blood of Christ during the sacrament.²⁰ He further states, “It is not only that the person sharing the cup and the broken bread establishes a union with Christ. A further union is established through ‘partaking’ (*metechomen*) of the same loaf: the union between all the members of the celebrating community.”²¹ Cooke and Macy witness by saying that “the ritual (meal) not only united the believers with their god(s) but also united the believers themselves into a community reinforcing their beliefs and their commitment to a particular lifestyle.”²² Eating is connecting and

¹⁹ Jean Royer, “The Sabbath, Passover, and Eucharist Meals,” 516.

²⁰ Francis J. Moloney, *A Body Broken for a Broken People: Eucharist in the New Testament* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 161.

²¹ Moloney, *A Body Broken*, 161.

²² Cooke and Macy, *Christian Symbol and Ritual*, 91.

covenanting with God through Eucharist. It is a means to connect and covenant with the context, realizing God extends Godself in and through the human experience of communion.

In the Ancient Near East, eating was used as a means to fellowship, to experience a sense of community, and to cut covenants between different parties. In the Ancient Near East, these covenants were binding and legal instruments that tethered two or more parties together. Depending on the people who arranged the covenant, it could mean “to clasp, to fetter, to bond, to cut a bond, or to pact,”²³ which carries a sense of deep connection and responsibility to one another via the covenant. However, according to Beacham, the covenant is not animated until the swearing of the oath is completed. He states, “A covenant ceremony might include a meal...or some other physical act performed. Nevertheless, there was no legal contract...and no obligatory force...until the moment when the party (unilateral) or parties (bilateral) officially swore to the terms of record.”²⁴ The form and order of the covenant were intended to join two opposing parties with language that both parties enjoy, which was time-honored to glorify God/a god.

Seen as a structured and orderly period in the human experience, eating in Scripture is a time to honor God as Provider of all things while blessing the food He has created for human consumption. “Whether one is formally observant or not, this has the effect of focusing one’s attention on what one is eating,”²⁵ honoring He who has shared His benevolence with

²³ Roy E. Beacham, “Ancient Near Eastern Covenants,” *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* 15, no. 1:112-113, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAIACO210614001084&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

²⁴ Beacham, “Ancient Near Eastern Covenants,” 121-122.

²⁵ Kalman J. Kaplan, Matthew B. Schwartz, and Moriah Markus Kaplan, “Eating and Drinking Narratives in Biblical-Rabbinic Versus Graeco-Roman Writings,” *Journal of Religion & Health*, March 2021, 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01209-6>.

humankind. Eating among others also carried a certain level of significance. Walter T. McCree posits that meals shared by “nomad or to the semi-nomad or even to the descendants of nomadic tribes the mention of food immediately suggests a covenant relationship between the partakers.”²⁶ Religiously, food is central to fellowship and community, establishing a value system of what to eat and with whom to eat.

Although most Christians contend for religion from the perspective of orthodoxy (right belief), Graham Harvey posits that believing is centered around fellowship and what is eaten in that communal environment. Harvey states that “foodways are so frequently central to religious acts...that they may define ‘religion’ as much as they differentiate between religions.”²⁷ Though the differences in what is eaten and who is sharing in the meal are apparent from one religion to another, eating seems to establish a continuity within a community of witnesses in varying religious sects. Regarding eating in a eucharistic community, Moloney posited that “the Eucharist is food for ‘the body.’ This means that the celebration of the Eucharist maintains and strengthens the union between the believers and Christ and that they become, together, the community that belongs to him.”²⁸ The Apostle Paul, in I Cor. 10:14-22, distinguishes what is done and shared at the Lord’s Table from the pagan table of communion. *Koinonia*, as described above, is different from eating what has been offered to idols. Paul warns the Church of Corinth

²⁶ Walter T. McCree, “The Covenant Meal in the Old Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 45, no.1-2 (1926): 120, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001330970&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

²⁷ Graham Harvey, “Respectfully Eating or Not Eating: Putting Food at the Centre of Religious Studies,” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 26: 32-46. <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAiAZI180410000850&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

²⁸ Moloney, *A Body Broken*, 162.

to flee idol worship, which includes their dietary habits. For Paul, the bread and body of Christ are now the central attraction of the diet of the sanctified, those who love the Lord. Similarly, John Chrysostom of the fifth century contends for this point stating, “This is what lovers do. When they see those whom they love desiring what belongs to strangers and despising their own, they give what belongs to themselves and so persuade them to turn away from the gifts of those others.”²⁹ This warning comes not only to redirect eating but in this redirection to maintain the unity of the one body (one bread), the Church. Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine attest that the Church is one bread (body) made up of many wheat grains. By water (baptism), all wheat bonded, and by the fire (Holy Spirit) was all the scattered wheat made into bread.³⁰ The Table of the Lord, the eating of the elements, is meant to unify the Church and maintain the Spirit’s unity in the bond of peace. Across and beyond religious lines, eating is one of the anchoring acts of the human experience. In religion, however, eating points to a spiritual ethos that connects that community to its god (God) and each other. The genesis of the Hebrews’ relationship with Yahweh is directly connected with the exodus meal.

What it meant to eat before leaving Egypt

On the night the Lord carried out His judgment in Egypt, the Hebrews were given a *seder*, or order, on what to eat, detailing how to cook what would be eaten and how to govern themselves while eating when the Lord passed over. After being sacrificed, the paschal lamb’s blood was

²⁹ Gerald Bray and Thomas C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: 1-2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 95.

³⁰ Bray and Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 96.

applied to the doorposts and lintel of each house of the Hebrews. This ablution and treatment of the blood signified surrendering one's will to another while agreeing to the contract or covenant terms.³¹ By engaging in the acts handed down by Yahweh, the Hebrews agreed to be in covenant with Him. The Hebrews were asking for protection from the "good spirits" represented in Yahweh and to be delivered and preserved from the "evil spirits" manifested in Egypt and in the surrounding people groups they would encounter after leaving Egypt.³² In dress, they were to be adorned and ready for traveling out of Egypt and for preparing a specific meal for consumption. Even before leaving Egypt, Yahweh showed His favor and blessing on the Hebrews by supplying the necessary elements for consumption. Yahweh provides all of creation, from the soil to the table. Referred to as "the Mediterranean Triad of grain, wine, and oil,"³³ they represented the foundation of all of what is food for humankind and are connected to the elements of the Passover meal. The command from the Lord to the Hebrews was that,

They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord.³⁴

³¹ Beacham, "Ancient Near East Covenants," 125.

³² Demetrius R. Dumm, "Passover and Eucharist," *Worship* 61, no. 3 (1987): 203, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000974548&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

³³ Thomas W. Mann (Thomas Wingate), "Not by Word Alone: Food in the Hebrew Bible." *Interpretation* 67, no. 4 (2013): 351, <https://doi.org/10.177/0020964313495515>.

³⁴ Exod 12:8-11.

The institution of the feast of Passover, though some scholars attest it was “borrowed by Israel and adapted to her own purposes,”³⁵ was the celebration of the Hebrews’ freedom from Egyptian bondage. Brant Pitre asserts that the Passover night is “the paschal *liturgy*—the sacrificial ritual—that was to be carried out by the Jewish people on that first night and for all time.”³⁶ Not only was the tenth plague to be remembered as the portal to freedom each time the exodus meal was enjoyed, but the meal was also to be enacted as the ground for recapitulating the freedom granted by the Liberator. The provision of God was made evident in both the plague and the meal. It would seem the plague made room for the meal.

From the night of the Passover to Christ and beyond, that night would be remembered and practiced for continuing ages. The night was to be remembered as the time Yahweh delivered His people from the grip of Egypt. The elements used to commemorate the Lord preparing His people for the exit from Egypt recapitulated the entire history and bitterness of being enslaved for over four hundred years. The exit dinner entailed a menu of bitter herbs, bread without yeast, and roasted lamb (Exod 12:8). The community was to share the exit meal with others who did not have the elements necessary to fulfill the prescribed requirements to survive the coming judgment of Yahweh in the form of death for the firstborn male child. With the sacrificed lamb’s blood painted on the doorposts of each house participating in the exit meal, the angel assigned to execute the death sentence would pass over said homes. With the act of eating in each home, along with the slaying and eating of a whole lamb, the concepts of feast and sacrifice merged in the Passover meal and pointed to the Lord’s Supper.

³⁵ Dumm, “Passover and Eucharist,” 201.

³⁶ Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper*, 50.

From Table to Table

The Passover was an annually celebrated feast for the Hebrews. After the initial institution of this spring festival, the Hebrew community was to commemorate the exodus from Egypt by continuing to carry out the feast with a pilgrimage to the Temple with their lamb to be slain. With the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt into the wilderness journey toward Canaan, their worship became structured around the Temple (or Tabernacle) and ordered in seasons. Referring to Exod 12 and Deut 16, "In both these passages, elsewhere in the OT, and in non-biblical texts which mention the Passover, the eating of the Paschal lamb is associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which falls at the same time as Passover and continues for seven days."³⁷ Scripture captures this feast continuing until the time of Christ. Even after the incarnate Christ ascended to the Father, the Passover continued its obligatory nature within the Jewish community. Louth, Livingstone, and Cross explain, "After the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, Jews continue to observe the Passover meal (the *Seder*) omitting the sacrifice of the lamb, while ritually recounting the events of the first Passover and Exodus (the 'Passover Aggadah')."³⁸ In essence, celebrating the Passover is an *anamnesis* for the Jewish community that highlights and continues to prophesy that God is a deliverer.

Christian writers may view the evening meal of Jesus with His disciples as the final Passover meal that instituted the Eucharist. Whether Christ intended to dismantle the celebration of the Passover by using elements of the Passover to institute the Eucharist to His Church is subject to debate and cannot be fully exhausted in this work. Xavier Leon-Dufour says, "The

³⁷ Andrew Louth, E.A. Livingstone, and F.L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2022), 1451.

³⁸ Louth, Livingstone, and Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary*, 1451.

first Christians did not invent their rites; they adopted and adapted the practices of their Jewish ancestors,”³⁹ with the Eucharistic liturgy taking its shape from this time of blessing. He further posits that in both Judaism and Christianity, “The bread and wine are food and therefore signify new life. Taken as a whole, this food that has become a meal expresses the very life of the community,”⁴⁰ therein making the many of the community, one body. However, space will be given to the argument of Jesus moving from His Jewish table form, which involved only the celebration by the Jewish community of Yahweh as Deliverer, to the Table handed down by Christ to His apostles where all can feast on Jesus’s flesh and blood for eternal life (John 6:53).

The Synoptic Gospel writers imply that what has been deemed the institution of the Eucharist was done in concert with the Passover meal (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:11). It was during the Passover meal while sitting at the head of the table as the father would during the Passover meal in the custom of the Jews, Christ shares the words of institution (“this is My body; this is My blood”) with His disciples. Continuing in the Jewish format, with the blessing pronounced over the bread and cup, Jesus shared them with his disciples and instructed them in the same.⁴¹ From this point, the disciples were given a new tradition they would pass on to the Church that would be enacted until the Lord’s return.

The tradition handed over to the Church from the apostles by Christ is eating at the Lord’s Table, His body and blood. *The Meaning of Tradition* and *The Household of God* are

³⁹ Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986), 44-45.

⁴⁰ Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 45.

⁴¹ Mel Hunnicutt, “The Eucharist: A Passover Mystery,” *Sisters Today* 60, no. 7 (1989): 417–18, <https://search-ebscohost.com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=CPLI0000145933&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

books that serve as instruments to define church tradition. Yves Congar and Lesslie Newbigin offer their understanding of what tradition means to the church universally and how the traditions of the Church interplay with the Scriptures. Their perspective of tradition is not only what the Church's foundation is and what the Church believes but also how the praxis (practices) of the Church should be influenced by its tradition. In essence, to the writers, tradition is an embodied witness that is lived out in the community of the Church as handed down by the apostles.

Tradition can be understood as the transmission of the whole that comprises the Church in "the sacraments, ecclesiastical institutions, the powers of the ministry, customs, and liturgical rites – in fact, all the Christian realities themselves."⁴² Often known as the "Protestant principle," evangelicalism finds its center in biblical authority and being justified by faith.⁴³ Biblical authority and justification by faith are not inconsistent with the Church's tradition. However, the catholic (universal) Church also considers the creeds, the sacraments, and the teachings of the Fathers as part of the continuity of the Church. The stability of the Christian faith is Scripturally supported (Ephesians 4:13), encouraged, and realized in a liturgical context. In his book *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal*, Gordon T. Smith engages these three realities of the Christian heritage with the need to merge them into a worship context. Smith asserts that "true Christian worship is Christ-centered, not pneuma-centered. The meaning of worship is that the ascended Christ is adored, preached, and encountered in the Holy Meal."⁴⁴ Not overpowering the other, the preached Word and the Table of the Lord are in tandem with the witness of the Holy Spirit. The preached Word declares Christ. At the Table of the Lord, the church community eats

⁴² Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 13.

⁴³ Robert Webber and Donald Bloesch, *The Orthodox Evangelicals* (New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1978), 46.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 27.

the body and drinks the blood of Christ through the mystery of the Holy Spirit after the *epiclesis*. At the Table of the Lord, evangelicalism, sacramentalism, and Pentecostalism merge to express Christ.⁴⁵ The Church's unity affirms Christ's mystical truth in the Church; without that unity, the Church falters in its entire reality. Newbigin believes “that the divinely willed form of the Church’s unity is at least this, a visible company in every place of all who confess Jesus as Lord, abiding together in the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers.”⁴⁶

The Word, the Spirit, and the Sacraments embody the sacred deposit of the Church. By this tradition, the Church lives out, defends, and gives an apology for its faith. Yves Congar, in his work *The Meaning of Tradition*, states, “Tradition is not merely memory; it is actual presence and experience,”⁴⁷ which can be better qualified within a sacramental environment. The tradition of the Christian heritage rests better within a context that encourages a mental ascension to the Word, embodying that preached Word and consummating the *Word* at the Table. This tradition calls in the whole of the Church and that which animates the Church as a whole because “we need traditions to live; the Bible itself, the undisputed source of Christian truth, does not provide us with enough content to fill out our worship, not to say our lives.”⁴⁸ An understanding of the traditions of the Church does not pull the worshipper away from Christ. Rather, it considers Him as the fulcrum of the Christian faith while considering some traditions (not all) of the Church as

⁴⁵ Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 91.

⁴⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (Oregon: WIPF & Stock, 1953), 21.

⁴⁷ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 121.

⁴⁸ James C. Cutsinger, *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics & Orthodox in Dialogue* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 85.

being formative engagements of its history that deepen one's relationship with Christ. Cutsinger continues, "We need to accept tradition in principle, and at the same time we need to be critical of traditions, both our own and those of others, lest they become 'commandments of men' about which Jesus warns us,"⁴⁹ being constrictive or placing themselves equal to the Word of God, while at the same time not discarding them as if they are not part of the present reality of the Church. That, too, can be harmful. The call to the Table of the Lord allows the Church to involve the global community of the faith and the world in sharing in the life of Christ.

In Robert Webber and Donald Bloesch's *The Orthodox Evangelicals* and Gordon T. Smith's *Evangelical, Sacramental and Pentecostal*, there is an attempt to promote the need for a return to the foundational origins of the Christian faith. Both books lean into the need for Evangelicals to cross the bridge toward a recovery of the great tradition. In *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, there is a call made to the Evangelical community to embrace and embody the richness of the history of the Church without leaving their worship environment. In the *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal*, Smith attempts to synthesize the value of three liturgical streams necessary for the Christian believer without devaluing one.

To awaken Evangelicals to historic Christianity, *The Orthodox Evangelicals* established a call to corral those interested in recovering this history. Robert Webber posits that evangelicals are guilty of forgetting their Christian history, a sort of amnesia that has left the evangelical community deficient in its own heritage and pedigree.⁵⁰ Known as "The Chicago Call," a group convened in 1977 under the proposition that "today evangelicals are hindered from achieving full

⁴⁹ Cutsinger, *Reclaiming the Great Tradition*, 85.

⁵⁰ Robert E. Webber, *Common Roots: The Original Call to an Ancient-Future Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 39.

maturity by the reduction of the historic faith” and need “a recovery of our full Christian heritage.”⁵¹ This recovery of the Christian heritage was outlined in eight separate calls that detailed where this group believed evangelicals fell short in their Christian formation and continuity with the historic Church. Aiming toward an orthodox presentation of the historic church, the eight “calls” given by this group of evangelicals were as follows:

- A call to historic roots and continuity
- A call to biblical fidelity
- A call to creedal identity
- A call to holistic salvation
- A call to sacramental integrity
- A call to spirituality
- A call to church authority
- A call to church unity

The gesture made by these convening evangelicals was not to pull other evangelicals away from their beliefs but, within their contexts, to understand historic Christianity as vital to their whole spiritual formation. Though the “call” was made to the Evangelical community, it was narrow in its focus on who would hear the call. Lacking ethnic, social, and religious diversity, the Chicago Call was an ineffectual endeavor. The leading participants of the Call were primarily men, with three women with an Evangelical background, one Catholic priest, and no representation from churches in the East. Emilio Alvarez states, “Aside from the social, racial, and gender insensitivity, the call did little if anything in convincing its constituency or, for that

⁵¹ Webber and Bloesch, *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, 11-12.

matter, the broader evangelical world, of the need to rediscover orthodoxy.”⁵² Evangelicals, who are more interested in the written Word of God and faith in that Word, commonly stand against the traditions of the Church that include the transmission of the faith through oral tradition.⁵³ This transmission of the faith is what Alvarez alludes to as rediscovering orthodoxy, “*integrated biblical teaching as interpreted in its most consensual classic period...ancient consensual scriptural teaching*,”⁵⁴ as defined by Thomas C. Oden.

Faced with various issues hindering the widespread communication of the “call,” Evangelicals remained faithful to their core beliefs. In remaining loyal to their core beliefs, Evangelicals have isolated themselves from the broader, global Church. Some Christians would contend that social isolation from the global Church can leave one “cut off from the fellowship of believers seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and lacking any awareness of the faith of the church through the ages, is often a source of serious error.”⁵⁵ However, the Chicago Call did not fully embrace a more catholic (universal) historical faith. If there were to be proper consideration for a recovery of a whole Christian heritage, representation should have reflected the universal church. With the continuity of the catholic church, the Church’s history could be better represented and expressed, and not viewed only with Western consideration. The aspect of the Chicago Call most apropos to this work is the call to sacramental integrity and the need for the Church to meet at the Lord’s Table.

⁵² Emilio Alvarez, “Religious Education Encounters Paleo-Orthodoxy” (PhD diss., Fordham University, 2018), 29.

⁵³ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 52-53.

⁵⁴ Thomas C. Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 29.

⁵⁵ Cutsinger, *Reclaiming the Great Tradition*, 80.

Christians share in fellowship through the Word and the Spirit, and at the Table, they commune, in Him, who called them, with one another. Through the witness of the Holy Spirit, the Church joins together by the fitting of the same Spirit. Citing the words of St. Irenaeus, Congar agrees, “For where the Church is, there also is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all her grace. And the Spirit is truth.”⁵⁶ Against the thoughts of The Orthodox Evangelicals and Smith, Newbigin promotes the Church as Christ’s bride, not a denomination birthed out by human strength. Considering the Church in a *human* sphere, controlled by conciliar decisions, is absurd to Newbigin. He does not believe it is possible to merge or separate what already *is*. Newbigin points to Church unity through biblical preaching that points to Christ, The Body, which is already whole. As it expresses its communion with the Lord in the preaching of Scripture and at the Table of the Lord, the Church is not a series of exercises spawned from human ability. Newbigin goes beyond the borders of any denomination to declare that God *creates* His congregation or people rooted in the salvific act of His Son. For Newbigin, God’s congregation presents differently than some Christians have traditionally considered His *choosing*.

Newbigin refuses to be bridled by denominational bits that do not engage a global consideration of the witness of Christ and those to whom the witness of the Spirit is made evident. Like the Acts 2 narrative, Newbigin does not restrict the message and witness of Christ to only those who experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The borders of God’s congregation extend beyond any human comfort or designation. God’s community, Newbigin argues,

is the company of people whom it has pleased God to call into fellowship of His Son. Its members are chosen by Him, not by us, and we have to accept them whether we like them or not. It is not segregation, but a congregation and the power by which it is

⁵⁶ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 57.

constituted is the divine love which loves even the unlovely and reaches out to save all men.⁵⁷

Newbigin does not consider all of humankind as having accepted Christ as Lord. Still, all humanity is to be considered God's *congregation* because, in all things, humanity is observing His operation on the stage of existence. For Newbigin, all of creation is witnessing the acts of God and is welcomed to join in as God is represented in the invisible and the visible church.

Although there is an invisible, mystical Church, the Church is also visible. The visibility of the Church is expressed in the Word, the Spirit, and the Sacraments. Newbigin elaborates on the incorporation of Christ, detailing that "we are made members in Him by hearing and believing the Gospel, by being received sacramentally into the visible fellowship of His people, and both of these only through the living presence of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁸ It is by the Spirit that both Word and Sacrament are pulled together to manifest the reality of both. Citing Simon Chan, Smith says of the continuity of the Word, the Spirit, and the Table that "without active participation and the Spirit's presence, the liturgy of the Word becomes mere intellectualism; the liturgy of the sacrament becomes mere ritualism."⁵⁹ The merging of all three pushes the Church closer to a "household of God" that is biblically reflective of the Acts 2 narrative.

The preaching of Christ, along with the partaking of the body and blood of Christ, are fulfilled at the Table of the Lord. The Table is an exercise of eating and drinking, but it also does preach Christ in a visible format. The Table of the Lord is not only a remembrance of Christ, but

⁵⁷ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 29.

⁵⁸ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 131.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental and Pentecostal*, 93.

an entire reality of Christ's personhood and mission as expressed in worship. The activity at the Table does not only declare the Lord and His life at that moment; the Table is also the witness of Christ to come. The Table of the Lord preaches the gospel as it was given and expressed through the life of Christ. The Table of the Lord prophesies the return of the Lord, as He promised while instituting the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Evangelicals, Sacramentalists, and Pentecostals agree that preaching is significant to the Church. Preaching for each Christian may take on different forms and expressions, but they are part of the universal church. Newbigin speaks to this tension by claiming,

Each body is compelled to regard what it holds as of the *esse* of the Church. Yet no body can admit that what others hold apart from it is of the *esse* of the Church, for that would destroy its own claim to be the Church. We are drawn to one another by a real working of the Holy Spirit which we dare not resist, but we are prevented from accepting one another as Churches by loyalty to the very truth upon which our existence as Churches seem to stand.⁶⁰

To resist and deny the pull toward the core of the Church is to negate the operation of the Holy Spirit towards another Christian that the same Spirit has birthed. As stated earlier, the Church is where the Spirit and diversity are evident. Congar rightly says, "All Christians are collectively responsible for Christianity..."⁶¹ as all Christians make up the Christian heritage and are witnesses of the deposit of faith in the Church.

While engaging the four books relative to the Recovery of the Great Tradition, Newbigin's attempt to "merge" the streams of Christianity challenged him and raised some thoughts. Based on his global perspective of the Church and how God determines His household,

⁶⁰ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 111.

⁶¹ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 62.

the doctrine of the Church being in Christ, and because of Christ, tore down walls of division. If the Church is because of and born out of Christ, the Church universal is His and not divided (1 Cor 1:13). The Chicago Call, based on Newbigin's assertions of the Church being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, was possibly determined to fail from its genesis. The "calls" themselves were not failed attempts because they pointed toward the Great Tradition's recovery. However, the calls sided with the West without considering the East as part of the universal Church, which stifled who would hear the calls. Congar upholds tradition as part of the Church's centrality, regardless of locale. He leans into the tradition of the Church as global, not denominationally restrictive, nor driven by any claim to any reformation. However, a particular "reformation" may carry a fragrance of the Great Tradition if it aims to keep the feast of Eucharist in the witness of the Spirit and the preached Word. Furthermore, any reformation ought to be a turn toward the historic church and what Christ gave to His apostles and what they handed down to the church in preaching the gospel and the celebration of the Eucharist in the witness of the Spirit. A realization of what the Great Tradition offers to those who have not considered this recovery pulls the skeptical to the core of the faith of the Church: to preach the Word, participate in the operation of the Spirit, and share in fellowship at the Table of the Lord.

From the inception of the Church, Eucharist was celebrated as a continuation of the life of Christ in the Church. Paul speaks of this sacrament as the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20). Eucharist, as it is known, is a development in the Church from the word *eucharistein*, which means "to give thanks."⁶² The development of the word eucharist is evident in the activity of the early church immediately following the death and resurrection of Christ. Bernardino, Owen, and

⁶² Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 1.

Elowsky explain that “Ignatius uses ‘Eucharist’ as a technical term to indicate both the celebration by which Christ is made really present and the mystery that reactualizes Christ’s redemptive incarnation and creates unity in the church.”⁶³ Ignatius continued to push the importance and significance of the eucharistic celebration of the saints in his letter to the Ephesians as the unifying factor of the church that also destroys demonic powers. He says, “Make every effort to assemble more frequently *eis eucharistian theou kai eis doxan*. For when you assemble frequently the powers of Satan are overcome, and his work of destruction is itself destroyed by your concordant faith.”⁶⁴ The unity of the eucharistic celebration was also a warning from Ignatius of other “celebrations” that did not present the body and blood of Christ. For Ignatius, celebrating the Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood because, as he commented in his letter to the Philadelphians, “There is only one flesh (*sarx*) of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup to unite us in his blood.”⁶⁵ This word *sarx* is used in John’s gospel (1:14; 6:51, 55-56) to highlight and ground the reality of the incarnate Lord and to authenticate the validity of His flesh in the eucharist. However, the gathering of the believing community does not *make* the body and blood of Christ the reality of unity, but the reality of unity is realized within the liturgy of the assembly in the celebration of the Eucharist by the witness of the Spirit. Martin Luther believed to be the case, that though the sacrament of the Eucharist is a fellowship, the gathering community does not make the sacrament what it is. Eucharist, for Luther, “is not

⁶³ Angelo Di Berardino, Thomas C. Oden, and Joel C. Elowsky, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 855.

⁶⁴ Raymond Johanny, *The Eucharist of the Early Christians* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978), 50.

⁶⁵ Johanny, *The Eucharist of the Early Christians*, 53.

constituted horizontally by men being gathered together, but much rather by a higher authority independent of them, that is, vertically.”⁶⁶

As a development but also a shift out of the Jewish Passover, this new church met daily to hear the preaching of the gospel, to fellowship, and to break bread (Acts 2:42,46). Other names, such as “our daily bread,” or “our *epiousios* bread,” came out of an early rendition of the Lord’s Prayer; “the Lord’s Supper” comes from possibly the early 40s and traced to the liturgical traditions of the churches at Corinth and Antioch; and “the breaking of the bread” or *he klasis tou artou* from Luke’s Gospel is synonymous with eucharist and carries the same essence of giving thanks to the Lord for His sacrifice.⁶⁷ These terms not only give thanks to God, but indicate a “passing on” or “sharing” in fellowship with the eucharistic community called the church. The eucharistic meal was a shared meal, like the Jewish Passover, which details Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and future coming.

For the Christian tradition, the Eucharist is the *anamnesis*, “the power to experience anew the reality of Christ,”⁶⁸ the vein by which the church calls to mind the salvific act of Christ with the Scriptures and by the Spirit. Similar to the Passover meal recalling the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt by their Deliverer, the church experiences its salvation through Christ in the Eucharist. Like the Passover meal that was rehearsed in the Jewish setting for centuries, the Eucharist was handed over to the apostles by Christ and then to the church, the universal

⁶⁶ Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 37.

⁶⁷ LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament*, 2-3.

⁶⁸ James F. White, *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 104.

church, as a means to recall the act of Christ while unifying the church in Him and calling the *ekklesia* to one another.

The Lord's Table has been a space of contention for the church. Thomas Ryan believes that real presence is not the issue for the strife in the church, but he believes that ecclesiology, or how the church is understood to be, is the issue that divides.⁶⁹ Based on his research, he reports that most churches believe and teach real presence in the Eucharist, but frame it based on the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) document. The BEM document, also called the Lima Text, is the work of the, at that time, a 120-member group from the World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order (WCC) that met in Lima, Peru in 1982 and agreed upon a document that spelled out certain aspects of what the church believes and who the church is, as a "major contribution towards the visible unity of the churches."⁷⁰ The document asserted its ecclesial position around baptism, the Eucharist, and the church's mission. The WCC is comprised of church denominations of various kinds from around the world that would adopt this document as both Scriptural and consistent with the Great Tradition.

Represented at the 1982 session of the World Council of Churches were delegates from Oriental Orthodox churches, Eastern Orthodox churches, Lutheran churches, Reformed churches, Pentecostal churches, and observing Catholic churches, among others. In their next convocation, the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Consultation of 1984 affirmed the Lima document as being a faithful witness of the Church. The Consultation agrees that,

⁶⁹ Thomas Ryan, "Eucharist Sharing: Why the Churches Act Differently," *Ecumenism* 110 (June 1993): 29, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db&AN=ATLA0000875868&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁷⁰ Samuel Rayan, "The Lima Text and Mission." *International Review of Mission* 72, no. 286 (1983): 199, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000929967&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

In its treatment of eucharist as thanksgiving, memorial, invocation, communion, and meal of the kingdom, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* succeeds in conveying a sense of the full significance of the eucharistic celebration. Its accent on frequent celebration of the eucharist and participation in communion we also find in keeping with the faith of the Church.⁷¹

The Consultation even agrees with the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* in their understanding of the Eucharist as the food that forms the participating believer in the Eucharist. The personal encounter with Christ in the Eucharist enables the participant to embody and express Him to and in their context. The Eucharist is the message of Christ, ingested and then lived out in the world. Being the visible representation and reality of Christ on the earth, the Church is in the world to declare and embody this witness.

Against what Ryan believes is an ecclesiological matter, the issue that hinders truly united fellowship for other church streams is presented at the Table. The conflict may stem from how the church views the Eucharist. Eucharist being explored and upheld as a sacrament of the church, since the word sacrament is not used in sacred Scripture, has left some believers marginalized.

Gaining its ground in the Greek word *mysterion*, the Latin *sacramentum* is defined as “a pledge of fidelity publicly symbolized by a visible sign”⁷² and “has come into use in ecclesiastical and theological language to indicate specifically religious events.”⁷³ Thomas Howard agrees that sacrament is not mentioned in Scripture but in Christian language means a

⁷¹ Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation, “An Agreed Statement on the Lima Document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29, no. 3 (1984): 285, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000943964&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁷² Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 147-148.

⁷³ G.C. Berkouwer, *The Sacraments* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1969), 27.

pledge or a mystery and in *anamnesis* is the making present of the body and blood of Christ.⁷⁴

With the historically sacramental nature of the church, disassociating the heavenly presence from the physical realities within the church is against being sacramental. Hans Boersma sees the mystery or sacrament of the Eucharist as being the reality of the sacramental environment of the church, which he calls sacramental ontology. He also sees all of the created order seated in its own unique sacramental space. He asserts that “the sacramental ontology of much of the Christian tradition, the created order was more than an external or nominal symbol. Instead, it was a sign (*signum*) that pointed to and participated in a greater reality.”⁷⁵ Possibly one of the first to publicize the usage of the term sacrament was Tertullian when speaking about baptism. Later, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) officially adopted and approved seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, marriage, penance, extreme unction, and Holy Orders) during the Council of Trent (1545-63), along with approving the term transubstantiation, a term used in an attempt to explain the changing of the substance of the elements during the Eucharist.⁷⁶ The Catholic position of seven sacraments was reduced to two within the (Protestant) Reformation theology, to those of baptism and Eucharist. The Catholic church rejected the Protestant position in the Council of Trent and still maintains the Catholic/Protestant disagreement. Conversely, the Protestant camp rejected the Catholic position for seven sacraments because there were no scriptural proofs for them. However, the RCC does not offer Scripture as proof for the seven sacraments, but they lean into the traditions of the Church, which

⁷⁴ Thomas Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 105-106.

⁷⁵ Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 23-24.

⁷⁶ Justin S. Holcomb, *Know the Creeds and Councils* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 106.

points to Scripture as the foundation for the seven sacraments. G.C. Berkouwer states, in the book *The Sacraments*, “If the light of tradition is not allowed to shine upon Scripture, the proof for a certain sacrament can be rather defective, but when Scripture is read in the light of tradition there can be no uncertainty.”⁷⁷ The conflict may be nuanced due to a disregard for the church’s traditions or a lack of knowledge of the traditions. Similarly, the Catholic/Protestant disagreement is felt in various church traditions today based on historic posits of the faith; even within the Protestant community, denominations argue against one another.

Eucharist is not estranged from Protestant history. One of the main ideas debated within the history of the Protestant church community is grace and the way grace is appropriated within the Eucharist. With transubstantiation being the position for the RCC, the Catholic Counter-Reformation sought ways to distance themselves from the RCC thought, with grace as the context. Grace, in the eucharistic setting, refers to the witness of the Spirit both at the Table and within the recipient, a witness of the body and blood of Christ as either the real presence in the elements or as a mere symbol of His body and blood.

So, what does happen to the elements during Eucharist? Many church traditions attempt to explain this mystery logically and scientifically has caused some people to become alienated from the Table. Howard contends that “attempts to reduce Christ’s gift of the Eucharist to something that we can reasonably cope with are like the attempts made by modernist Christians to reduce outrages like the Resurrection and the Ascension to figures of speech that convey abstract truths.”⁷⁸ The traditional Roman Catholic view of the elements or accidents asserts that the substance of the bread and wine are changed into Christ’s flesh and blood after a priest

⁷⁷ Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, 29.

⁷⁸ Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough*, 109.

consecrates the elements. The RCC tradition was established as early as “the later part of the 12th cent., and at the Lateran Council of 1215...but the elaboration of the doctrine was not achieved till after the acceptance of the Aristotelian metaphysics later in the 13th century, when it found classic formulation in the teaching of Thomas Aquinas.”⁷⁹ This teaching sought to explain the altering of the elements though the shape, taste, and texture of the accidents were not changed, “...the whole of Christ is fully present within each of the particles of the host.”

Martin Luther, an ardent opponent of RCC doctrine, later penned his *Ninety-Five Thesis* and fell out with Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli at the Marburg Colloquy over the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Luther maintained that the body and blood of Christ are physically present in the Eucharist but are “in, with, and under the bread and wine...in addition to the bread and wine.”⁸⁰ Luther did not deny Real Presence at Eucharist. He rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, believing that the elements did not change at the molecular level. Tethered to the concept of consubstantiation, the Lutheran belief of Real Presence is often confused with the Calvinistic or Reformed view of the Lord’s Supper. Calvin understood Real Presence differently than Luther, in that the body and blood of Christ are present during Eucharist but “not physically or bodily...his presence in the sacrament is spiritual or dynamic...true communicants are spiritually nourished as the Holy Spirit brings them into closer connection with the person of Christ.”⁸¹ Real Presence, in the Reformed view, is the idea that there is a local presence of Christ “with, and not a union of, Christ and the sacramental elements.”⁸² Christ is present at Eucharist because He is

⁷⁹ Louth, Livingstone, and Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1961.

⁸⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 353.

⁸¹ Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 354.

⁸² Louth, Livingstone, and Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 473.

omnipresent. Zwingli's position was that the Eucharist was merely commemorating Christ's death, while completely disagreeing with Luther's position of real presence. The Zwinglian community "...maintained that it is only the communicant's faith that makes Christ present in the eucharist; there is no question of any physical presence."⁸³ With Zwingli upholding his position against the Lutheran concept of real presence, the two parted company at the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529.

Eucharist

Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life...Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven...Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you...Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them (John 6: 32-33,35,41,53,56).

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor 11:23-26).

"Does this offend you?" (John 6:61b). These words asked by Jesus to His disciples during the Bread of Life discourse are nestled within a scandalous pericope that still challenges many in the Church. Jesus is undoubtedly challenging his audience to eat. As stated above, eating is common to all humankind in one form or another, but the eating detailed in John 6 is a unique invitation to

⁸³ Louth, Livingstone, and Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2139.

falsely perceived cannibalism. The push toward offense was accelerated when Jesus gave his flesh to be eaten and his blood to be drunk. Jesus further caused a stir when he elevates his body above the bread that the Jews ascribed as given by Moses in the wilderness.

John 6 is enacted in a defined manner at the institution of the Lord's Supper in Luke 22 and Paul's revelation of the feast in 1 Cor 11. The instructions from Christ were to eat his flesh, drink his blood, and to do it often. In an interview by Kenneth P. Kramer with Michael Caspi, an Orthodox Jew, he says that Jesus would not say to eat his flesh and drink his blood, as a practicing Jew himself. Caspi asserts, "There's no way that a Palestinian Jew in the first century of the Common Era would have ever identified himself with food and drink that was about to be consumed."⁸⁴ For Caspi, Jesus, as a parabolist, would have alluded to His body and blood being metaphorically bread and blood without leading people to consume Jesus's self. Dufour resists this thought because he sees Jesus in the John 6 discourse as a *symbol* (from the Greek *symbolon* meaning 'to put together') that is directly connected to the historical paschal meal and the present living Christ. The John 6 text points to the Eucharist as Jesus being bread and offering His blood. Even if one struggles with believing that the Bread of Life discourse of John chapter 6 primarily points toward a eucharistic encounter in the call to eating and drinking, Chris Green asserts that "it nonetheless seems likely that a Johannine sacramentality lies embedded in the text at some level of significance."⁸⁵ He further states that "we can reasonably propose that readers of the Fourth Gospel are warranted in taking the discourse as instruction both about *both* believing

⁸⁴ Kenneth P. Kramer (Kenneth Paul), "Jesus, as a Jew, Would Never Have Said That," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 47, no.4 (2012): 612.

⁸⁵ Chris E.W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2012), 230.

in Christ (i.e. feeding spiritually on him) *and* about the meaning of the church's sacramental practice and experience."⁸⁶

The Lord's Supper is a turn from the traditional Passover feast common to the Hebrews. The entire event, known to the earliest Christians as *fractio panis*, "was the action that Jesus performed at the Last Supper and repeated after his resurrection. The first Eucharist was passed down as a complete Paschal event: Christ, the suffering servant, becomes the victorious Lord...a proclaiming of the Lord's death until he comes."⁸⁷ The Lord's Supper, handed over to the disciples that day in the Upper Room continued to be the act that joined the Church to celebrate His death, resurrection, and future return. Even more, the Eucharist is that sacrament of the Church that welcomes the Church to the Lord's Table to experience a restoration of the divine image (Gregory of Nyssa); it promotes real presence in the consecrated elements and recapitulates the sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharistic banquet (John Chrysostom); it is perceived as the center of worship in the Church and "the true Sacrament of the Passover" (Jerome); it is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Augustine of Hippo); through real presence, it elevates the spiritual nature of the sacrament (Leo the Great); and, the Eucharist represents Christ's passion on the cross (Gregory the Great).⁸⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem says that, in the Eucharist, "We receive as of the body and blood of Christ. For in the figure of bread is the body given to you, and in the figure of wine the blood is given to you."⁸⁹ He further states, "Stop, therefore,

⁸⁶ Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 230.

⁸⁷ Di Berardino, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, 855.

⁸⁸ Dennis Billy, *The Beauty of the Eucharist: Voices from the Church Fathers* (New York: New City Press, 2010), 13.

⁸⁹ Maxwell E. Johnson, translated. *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: The Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses Ascribed to St. Cyril of Jerusalem* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), 115.

considering the bread and wine to be ordinary; for they are body and blood according to the Lord who made the declaration. For even if your senses suggest this to you, let faith confirm you.”⁹⁰ Though these great minds of the Church viewed Eucharist in both similar and differing ways, they nonetheless did not refuse to welcome or to be welcomed to the Table. The mind of the church sees the Table as being essential to the Christian and Christian church. Boersma posits that “the overall attitude among evangelicals continues to regard Eucharist and church as belonging to the well-being (*bene esse*) rather than to the very being (*esse*) of the Christian life.”⁹¹ Howard says of the Eucharist, “In the simple act of taking bread, and of blessing, breaking, and giving it to His disciples, the Lord gathered up all the mystery of the gospel: that the Word must become flesh, and that this flesh must be broken for the life of the world, and that unless and until we, His followers, participate in this mystery we have no life in us.”⁹² Gordon T. Smith asserts, “More than anything else we say or do, the Lord’s Supper enables us to receive the peace of Christ, to live in the peace of Christ, and to be a means by which the peace of Christ comes to our world.”⁹³

⁹⁰ Johnson, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, 115.

⁹¹ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 105.

⁹² Howard, *Evangelical is not Enough*, 113.

⁹³ Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 56.

Summary

The sacrament of the Eucharist calls together the human and the divine, highlighting and detailing the life and sacrifice of Christ. Chan states that the elements of the Eucharist are both ordinary and extra-ordinary “symbols that cast together (*symbolleîn*) the human and the divine, and this unity has its basis in the incarnation, the perfect union between the divine and human natures in the one person Jesus Christ.”⁹⁴ Therefore, Christocentric worship in the church includes the celebration of the Eucharist, which Paul admonishes the church to perform when she assembles because of its testimony of who Christ is (1 Cor 11:18). “If the church is the extension of the work of the triune God and worship is the way to realize the church, then the Eucharist is the supreme expression of the worship that realizes the church.”⁹⁵

Christ grounds the witness of the sacrifice, while the church celebrates by eating His body and drinking His blood. The call within the church is not only for her to assemble. The church is called to practice that which defines the assembly in the breaking of bread, which “is indeed a communion meal and meant to be for those who are in full communion with the church...the people eating the Lord’s Supper *are* in actual communion; anything less than the reality will not do.”⁹⁶ The church is rooted and centered in Christ; its worship is through Christ in the power of the Spirit, and the church honors Christ whenever the Eucharist is celebrated.

⁹⁴ Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 70.

⁹⁵ Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 72.

⁹⁶ Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 71.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT NARRATIVE AND FIELDWORK

Introduction

The ministry challenge for this project addressed the history of Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center (FHCWC), formerly known as Friendship Baptist Church (FBC), and its involvement in what is traditionally known as the ordinances of the church, specifically Holy Communion (Eucharist). Qualitative research, in the form of a survey and a focus group, was conducted to assess the ministry challenge. The information collected during the focus group and from the survey aided in assessing if the recovery of the great tradition of Holy Eucharist at FHCWC would deepen the spiritual formation of the church.

Research Methodology

The recovery of the great tradition of Holy Eucharist in Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center was fielded in two forms. An electronic survey invited twenty-three people to participate, with eighteen participants actually completing the survey. The eighteen individuals who participated are also leaders of particular ministries in the church. Ten questions on the survey related to the recovery of the great tradition. A focus group was also conducted. The focus group was limited to nine leaders within the church. Five of the nine participants were ordained clergy. Two out of the five ordained clergy, at one time, served as the lead pastor of a church. Still, their experiences between FBC and FHCWC varied beyond the experiences of those participants in the electronic

survey. Some participants in the online questionnaire were not old enough to remember FBC and only know the church as FHCWC. The ages of the participants for the focus group and electronic survey ranged from twenty-one to seventy years old.

The focus group was conducted for an hour. There was a ten-minute overview and introduction of how the activity would function, with time for participants to ask questions if they needed clarification about the instructions. The entire session was recorded for verbal accuracy. Four questions were taken from the electronic questionnaire and were posed to the focus group. The questions were asked and answered in a round-robin style, with three out of the nine participants being randomly selected to answer the questions. If the participants who were asked a specific question did not have an answer, the other six were asked if they wanted to answer the question and were allowed to answer based on their knowledge. At the close of the four questions, all participants were asked if they wanted to add to answers given about the questions posed during the session.

Instruments Used in the Data Collected

The electronic questionnaire was issued to eighteen prospective participants. Of the eighteen prospects, all eighteen participated and fully completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered through Survey Monkey. The questionnaire had ten questions, and the participants completed it in an average of about forty-one minutes. For the focus group participants and questionnaire participants, a notice of purpose and confidentiality was emailed to each participant, signed, and dated for records.

Formulation of Survey

The methodology for this project was qualitative. The qualitative research performed for this project was done in the form of a survey and through a focus group. Both the questionnaire and focus group engaged questions that would address their knowledge of the great tradition and components that make up the great tradition. The electronic questionnaire was conducted with all eighteen participants. The focus group was limited to nine different participants. The questions addressed the participants' understanding of the ordinances of the Baptist church (FBC) against the same ordinances being considered sacraments, according to the great tradition.

Gathering Survey Data

A questionnaire link was issued to all those who agreed to participate in the study. The participants are all members of FHCWC, with some long-standing members who also knew the church under the name Friendship Baptist Church. The focus group was conducted in person in the fellowship hall of FHCWC.

The questionnaire required the participants to answer questions in short or long answer form. The length of any response was based on the participant, with no set requirement on the length of their answers. There was no statistical data required in this qualitative research that necessitated the research to have any charts or graphs.

Analyzing Survey Data and Summary

Upon closing the electronic questionnaire, the researcher was able to report how many of the participants engaged and completed the questionnaire. All eighteen participants completed the questionnaire. The researcher was also able to read the answers of each participant and group the answers together if the answers aligned with each other. Finally, the researcher determined strengths and weaknesses relative to the participant's knowledge of the great tradition based on responses to the questions. The examination of the answers helped to determine where more intentional formation and information can be applied to the church.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT EVALUATED

Introduction

The primary purpose of this qualitative research was to consider the significance of the great tradition in the life of Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center by engaging specific aspects of the great tradition through guided questions and dialogue. An anonymous online questionnaire and a focus group gathering attempted to gather twenty-three participants' answers to specific questions relative to the great tradition, with eighteen of the twenty-three fully participating.

The qualitative research engaged in this work was not intended to prove nor disprove the research question through qualitative assessment. The research is intended to gauge the level of knowledge the church has concerning the great tradition of Holy Eucharist and its need in the church for deeper spiritual formation. The online questionnaire and focus group responses served as comparative data with the research, which provides a ground from which the recovery of the great tradition of Holy Eucharist in FHCWC can be utilized. The conclusions that can be drawn from the assessment will help guide the spiritual formation of the church.

Analysis of Data

A broad range of people from various age groups were engaged in this work to gather the appropriate information from the online questionnaire and focus group. A wide range of age groups enabled the data to reflect the age groups evident in the church. Historically and presently, FBC (FHCWC) has always been represented by a broad age range. Various age groups represent the church, but there is a trend of people maintaining their connection to this church for extended periods. The data may present a tendency closer to the *truth* of the research intent.

The focus group and online questionnaire participants are all African American. Though the participants are all African American, not all were born in the United States. Two of the participants are of Caribbean origin by birth. Some participants were born in the southern region of the United States (Mississippi, South Carolina, Alabama). One participant is a descendant of a parent from Jamaica, West Indies. The rest of the participants were born in New York, specifically Rochester, or a town or city near Rochester.

The participants for the focus group and questionnaire were both men and women. The total number of men in the focus group was four, and five women were asked to participate. All nine people asked to participate agreed to participate in the group. There were ten men and thirteen women (23 total). Out of the twenty-three individuals invited to participate in the questionnaire, eighteen agreed and participated in answering the questionnaire questions. The participants all work in a particular aspect of the ministry. Some participants were clergy, others were deacons, and the rest were laity. Those who participated in the focus group ranged from 48 to 70 years of age. Those who participated in the questionnaire ranged from 21 years to 70 years of age. While filling out the questionnaire, some participants did not answer specific questions about Friendship Baptist Church because they had not been born yet. Their inability to answer

specific questions did not hinder the completion of the questionnaire, nor did it impact the results of the data acquired.

Listed below are the questions that were presented in the focus group session. The focus group questions were used to start the verbal exchange during the group session. The participants were to answer the question(s) posed during the session, and they could elaborate on the answers to the question(s) if they deemed it necessary.

- How do you define the Great Tradition?
- What are the traditions of FHCWC (formerly known as Friendship Baptist Church)?
- How do you define Water Baptism?
- How do you define Holy Eucharist (Communion)?

Round-Robin 1

The three selected participants were unaware of the great tradition in the first section of the round-robin of questions. After no response from the selected three participants, the floor was open for the other participants to define what they believed the great tradition was to them. One participant said they think the great tradition was “traditions formed by families, community, and the church passed down from generation to generation.” Some language within the responses was on track to understanding what of the great tradition is being passed down in the Church. Follow-up responses to the previous answer were that the great tradition was information “passed down from our *Bible* (I believe the participant meant Church Fathers) of things God wanted us to know” and that it is “traditions handed down from the Apostles” along with insight

given to the apostle Paul. These two participants seemed to have a possible sense of what the great tradition is but could not express in complete detail, with the appropriate words, what it is. Being “passed down” or “traditions being handed down” is the beginning of the formal language for understanding the great tradition. Two other participants asked for the great tradition to be explained to understand it. They were refused because the focus group was not intended to teach material relative to the questions asked.

Round-Robin 2

The next section of the round-robin asked, “What are the traditions of FHCWC (formerly known as FBC)?” The selected three participants gave an initial answer, with some follow-up answers later in the round. The first responding participant stated that during the Watch Night (New Year) service, “Baptism and Communion was once a year” for FHCWC. The next participant said of FBC, “Every first Sunday, we had Holy Communion. Also, with water baptism, anyone could be baptized without formal teaching as we do now. The ladies would wear white because they were missionaries; the first lady was to sit on the second pew, not doing anything but look pretty.” The third participant commented that “there would be special meetings, business meetings, and that the men would wear black and white on the first Sundays. If someone missed communion three times, they were out of fellowship with the church.” Other traditions of FBC/FHCWC that other participants remembered were “Men’s Day,” “Women’s Day,” afternoon services on Sundays except for the first Sunday, Usher Day, Youth Day, Choir Day, and Church Anniversary services. Building funds, paying dues, summer church picnics, and revivals were part of the cadence of the church. Deacons had assigned seating (front row). When people joined the church, they were given “the right hand of fellowship,” with full rights and privileges within the church. Finally, each Sunday, the church would recite certain verses from

Habakkuk (1:5, 2:3). These verses were used during the building initiative at FBC before erecting a new edifice and served as the anchor text verses for the Church. Every member of the church was encouraged to memorize the verses.

Round-Robin 3

The third section of the round-robin asked the question, “How do you define water baptism?” The initial three selected participants answered the question, followed by others from the focus group. The first participant stated baptism is “the outward expression of an inward reality that mirrors the life, death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The next participant said baptism resembles someone who “while being immersed, the old man goes down (in the water), and the new man is revealed, renewed, and rejuvenated by the Holy Spirit.” The third participant stated that baptism expresses someone “going down as the dead man and coming up new in the Holy Spirit.” Each of the first three participants tied the candidate for baptism to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection or to shedding off that which is old and exchanging the old for newness in Christ Jesus. The rest of the group participants had follow-up statements to the question stating that “we are identified with Christ when we are baptized, and that it is “a witnessing tool to evangelize our obedience to Christ.” To another, baptism is done by “total immersion.” Another participant stated that baptism is “the bold spiritual ceremony which declares living a holy life, and there are witnesses who agree with you” as they watch it transpire. The final participant’s response was very communal. It reflected an understanding of the universal church in concert with the great tradition, stating that baptism is “the gathering of people who witnessed the burial and resurrection of a new life of that person. And they would *charge* you to live in this new and holy way. There is accountability for those witnesses, and then you (the candidate) enter a family, and we are accountable to one another, to keep and uplift one another.” The rite of

baptism performed for the final participant joined the candidate with the global church through the local church and held the candidate and the witnesses accountable.

Round-Robin 4

The final question posed in the focus group was, “How do you define Holy Eucharist (Communion)?” The three selected participants answered the question, with the first saying that the Holy Eucharist is “an evangelistic time for the Body of Christ to share the story of how the church comes to partake of a command that was given by Christ to do in remembrance of Him. Holy Eucharist has to be done.” This participant sees the Holy Eucharist as an act that expresses Jesus to those outside of the church, based on the Eucharist being a command of Christ to His church. However, the world is not going to remember Christ. Holy Eucharist is for the church to remember who Christ is and what Christ has done for the church in His salvific act on the cross. The second participant stated that the Holy Eucharist cannot be taken lightly because it is “literally the body and blood of our Savior.” They said, “it should not be conducted by a novice of understanding and importance of the holy ordinance.” I believe the participant was speaking about the person administering the body and blood of Christ. They should not be a novice (beginner) in what they know about the ordinance of the Holy Eucharist. Essentially, the priest administering the elements during Holy Eucharist should know what they are doing, or the participant could mean that the persons partaking of the elements during the Holy Eucharist should know what they are doing and what they are partaking in. The participant says that the elements of the Holy Eucharist “are not for everyone...there should be repentance before partaking...the heart should be reflective and repent of what we have done” before partaking of the body and blood of Christ. At this point, the participant seems to call to mind the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Cor 11:27-30, to examine themselves and not to be ignorant of sinning against

the body and blood of Christ. The other participants responded that Holy Communion “is also a time of reconciliation for brothers and sisters, although we should not wait until that time” and that “it is also a time of giving thanks for the salvation of our sins.” Participating in the Holy Eucharist is an individual and communal time of reconciliation. For these participants, Holy Eucharist points the partaker to God to further appreciate their reconciliation with Him and a communal reconciliation with those in the worshiping community. Another participant stated, “It (Holy Eucharist) is not just Communion; it is a liturgy. There is something that we should do before we partake of the elements.” The final comment about Holy Eucharist was that the participant “would not categorize it as a tradition, it is a command or order. It is a way of life.” Holy Eucharist is a way of life, an embodied act that extends beyond the sanctuary to the *walk* of the Christian believer. The extension beyond the sanctuary is a tradition because it represents the fullness of the Christian witness in Christ.

Listed below are the questions for the electronic questionnaire. The participants were asked to answer each question entirely based on their knowledge, experiences, and personal studies. There was no follow-up on the answers given, nor was there any feedback from the originator of the questionnaire. The questions put forth in the questionnaire were as follows:

- How would you define Water Baptism?
- How would you define Holy Eucharist (Communion)?
- What were the traditions of Baptism and Holy Eucharist in Friendship Baptist Church?
- What are the traditions of Baptism and Holy Eucharist in Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center?
- Is Holy Eucharist vital to the life of the Church? If so, in what ways?

- What, if anything, do you know about the Great Tradition?
- In what way(s) is the Holy Spirit evident in Baptism?
- In what way(s) is the Holy Spirit evident in the Eucharist?
- During Eucharist, how would you define the elements given during the celebration?
- When you hear the word “catholic,” what do you think of?

For the sake of time and space, similar answers will be condensed. The answers that stand out against the others will be given separate room and consideration.

Question 1

The first question on the electronic questionnaire was, “How would you define water baptism?” Six responding participants thought baptism was “an outward expression of an inward reality.” Baptism, to these participants, represents an inner washing that is being represented in the baptismal act. The baptism acts as a witnessing tool for those observing the rite and an internal washing. Three respondents believe baptism is a “participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The playing out of the baptism, going down, and coming up all preach the gospel to the candidate and witnesses. Two respondents referenced baptism as an act done with “submersion in water.” Three respondents stated baptism is a “trust, reliance, and obedience in Christ.” According to their comments, baptism is after salvation, producing trust, reliance, and obedience to Christ. Two respondents regarded baptism as a “ceremony, rite, or sacrament that introduces the candidate into the Christian community by the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit animates the sacraments of the Church and brings a soul into the worshiping community. These two respondents and their understanding of baptism resonate with the tradition of the Church. One participant commented that “the water for baptism is not *just* water. It is a

resting place for the Holy Spirit.” Referencing the stirring of the water by the angel (John 5:7), this respondent thought of the water as being charged by the witness of the Spirit, not only baptism as a mere act but, for the candidate, an experience of healing. This response also aligns with the Church's tradition and history.

Question 2

For the second question, participants were asked, “How would you define the Holy Eucharist (Communion)?” One participant answered by saying that “the Church gathers to examine itself and eat the body (bread) and blood (wine).” Speaking of those participating in the sacrament, they gather to examine themselves, which is checking for sin (referring to 1 Cor 11:28) before eating the Lord’s body and blood. Though part of the process of sharing in the sacrament, it is not the whole. Two respondents stated that Holy Eucharist is a “commandment from the Lord,” referring to Luke 22:19. Five respondents agreed that Eucharist is “eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ” as real presence in the sacrament. Nine respondents believe that the elements shared during Eucharist are “what *represents* the body and blood of Christ.” To them, the elements are merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ, not real presence. Three respondents believe that Eucharist is a “commemoration of the Last Supper” enacted in the modern church. The sacrament is a “look back” at what Jesus and His disciples did, but it seems there is no connection to Christ being resident in what the Church does today when performing the sacrament of Eucharist. One participant reported that Eucharist is an act that promotes a “personal union with Christ” when the sacrament is being performed but not when the bread and wine are being consumed as real presence. Six participants reported that Eucharist is representative of the “sacrifice of Jesus for sin,” which again refers to what Christ has done and not what He is doing in real presence, in real-time, in the Church. Finally, one respondent asserted that Eucharist is the “most important religious

service in the Christian church.” With debate, some would support this claim. However, Holy Eucharist is the gospel in motion, in eating, in praise, and in invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit to come upon the people and the elements through the epiclesis.

Question 3

Question three asks, “What were the traditions of Baptism and Holy Eucharist (Communion) in Friendship Baptist Church?” Four participants recalled that Eucharist was shared on “the first Sunday” of each month. Three participants stated that Baptism was performed on “the first Sunday” of the month when there were candidates. They noted that when there were candidates for baptism, at the end of the service of the Sunday that baptism was performed, Eucharist was also shared. However, baptismal candidates were not always present every first Sunday. Two participants stated that the candidates “had to be saved and baptized to partake of Holy Eucharist.” Based on the criteria outlined in FBC, many worshipers would leave after the benediction was given, and a separate service was conducted for those who stayed for Communion. Two participants recalled that “there was no teaching, and no kids could participate.” Two participants were either too young to remember or were not present during the years of FBC.

Question 4

Question four was posed to the participants in the electronic questionnaire, “What are the Baptism and Holy Eucharist traditions in Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center?” To this question, thirteen participants stated that baptism and Holy Eucharist are performed “during Watch Night (New Year’s Eve) service, once a year.” To be included in Holy Eucharist, seven participants said one had to be “saved and had completed the discipleship class.” A final participant believes that the “Holy Eucharist is an option,” and one can choose to partake. Based on this last answer, the

effect of the teaching of FBC has leaked into the praxis of FHCWC, making Communion an option and not a necessity. Only having Communion once a year can give worshippers the idea that the body and blood of Christ are not necessary or vital to the Christian experience. Choosing to partake of the body and blood of Christ lends to one believing they have an option in eating at the Lord's table.

Question 5

Question five of the questionnaire asks, "Is Holy Eucharist vital to the life of the Church? If so, in what ways?" Seventeen participants answered "yes" to the question. Six respondents agreed that Holy Eucharist is vital because it is "commanded by Christ" to His church. Eleven elaborated on why Holy Eucharist is essential to the Church because "it causes the Church to remember Christ's sacrifice on the cross," and His sacrifice included His broken body and spilled blood. Two respondents stated that the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is for the Church to have "a bond and *communion* with one another." Eucharist, for these respondents, is the opportunity to bring the participants of the sacrament closer together as a family. One respondent, however, said that Eucharist is "not vital but good to share with others." This statement attempts to undercut fellowship while stating that fellowship is good. Four respondents stated that partaking in Eucharist underscores "union with Christ." Union with Christ is union with His body, the Church. To not participate in Eucharist is to deny Christ; it is a denial of the body of Christ, His Church.

Question 6

Question six of the electronic questionnaire stated, "What, if anything, do you know about the Great Tradition?" Seven participants said they "know nothing about the great tradition" or have never heard of it. One participant believes the great tradition is "the application of religious

tradition and behavior.” One respondent stated that the great tradition is “ordinances of the Church.” The last two respondents seem to have a gentle sense of what the great tradition may be but do not possess enough information and details about it. The final three respondents agreed that the great tradition is “handed down messages from the apostles, creeds, sacraments, and teachings” for the Church.

Question 7

Question seven asked, “In what way(s) is the Holy Spirit evident at Baptism?” Two participants believe that the Holy Spirit is evident in Baptism to “empower for new life” in the candidate. It was unclear if these two participants stated that the Holy Spirit empowers for a new life, apart from the baptismal act, or if the Holy Spirit empowers the candidate for their new life only during Baptism. Three participants answered that this sacrament “means one is *baptized* into the death of Christ and sheds the old man,” referencing Romans 6:3. Three more participants posited that the candidate experiences “resurrection to new life and are set aside and consecrated” to Christ through baptism. The final participant resonated with the previous three participants’ answers and added: “when the ordinance is carried out properly.” Though it was not expressed, the final participant seemed to express some knowledge about how the sacrament of baptism is to be conducted. The history of the Church promotes a formula within the liturgy that would agree with the respondents’ statements. Essentially, to the final respondent, the rite of baptism is not to be carried out in a cavalier manner but should be carried out in a manner consistent with a prescribed formula handed down to the Church.

Question 8

From the electronic questionnaire, question eight asks, “In what way(s) is the Holy Spirit evident in the Eucharist?” Six respondents assert that “the Holy Spirit is in the believer because of their connection with Christ.” For these persons, the Holy Spirit is within the believer because they have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord but do not see the Holy Spirit as resident within the sacrament of Eucharist. Three more respondents state that “by the remembrance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ,” the Holy Spirit is in Eucharist. Essentially, the Holy Spirit encourages the memory of the participants of the Eucharist to remember the salvific act of Christ. In this way, the Holy Spirit is evident in the Eucharist. Three respondents agreed that the Holy Spirit is “causing those who want to participate in doing so” in the Holy Meal. One respondent believed the Holy Spirit during the Eucharist to be “present as part of the Godhead,” and another thought of the Eucharist as “an evangelizing tool for non-believers.” Two final respondents stated that during the Eucharist, the bread and wine are “real presence,” the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Without elaborating, the respondents did not explain how they believed the bread and wine to be real presence, but the great tradition would agree, by a mystery through the epiclesis.

Question 9

Question nine of the electronic questionnaire asked the participants, “During Eucharist, how would you define the elements given during the celebration?” One participant stated that the elements are “only bread and wine” without providing any further detail or explanation. Another participant said the elements “represent new life that connects the believers.” Without any detail, the connection of the believers could be a connection of *just* believers within the family of God. That would be true of the great tradition; the church universal is joined together at the Table of the Lord by the witness of the Spirit. The connection of the believers could also be defined as a connection

of the believers to God in Christ Jesus. That would be consistent with the essence of the great tradition. Three participants viewed the elements as “holy and sacred to the believer’s life” of Jesus Christ. Six participants asserted that the elements are “symbols of the body and blood of Christ.” The elements represent the body and blood of Christ, but to these participants, the elements are not or, by the mystery of the Holy Spirit, become the body and blood of Christ. Four participants understood the elements to be (or become) “real presence.” In more brief detail, they believed that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ, after citing Luke 22:19-20.

Question 10

The final question for the electronic questionnaire asked the participants, “When you hear the word “catholic,” what do you think of?” To one of the respondents, the word catholic means “people who subscribe to regular teachings of a church.” Five respondents consider the word catholic to mean “the universal church” or “traditional and widespread teachings.” This response could speak for the universal church, believing that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, or it could lean into a particular church stream that believes one thing or another about the Church. Six participants agreed that they think of “a Pope, priests, and nuns.” The assumption is that the respondents speak of the Roman Catholic Church since the usual reference people have to a Pope, a priest, and nuns is the Roman Catholic Church of the West. However, the East has Popes and priests who function within the context of the Church. Finally, five respondents said that when they hear the word catholic, they think of “the Roman Catholic Church, the Vatican, dirt, and pedophilia.” The word catholic here is defined as “universal” and considers the universal church, which includes the East and West. The Vatican is the seat of the Roman Catholic Church and where the Holy See or Pope resides. Dirt and pedophilia were interestingly used to understand the word catholic. Though sin

is part of the Roman Catholic Church, which they have admitted, the West is part of the universal Church, which is no stranger to sin.

Conclusions drawn from the questionnaire and focus group reveal that there needs to be an ongoing educational component within the church that raises the history of the universal church within the FHCWC context. The questionnaire and focus group highlighted areas of strength and weakness in the church's awareness of the great tradition of Holy Eucharist. The survey and focus group will aid in establishing an additional educational forum that can continue to enlarge and strengthen the church's spiritual formation.

The questionnaire and focus group showed promise for the spiritual formation of the church based on the knowledge revealed in the answers given in the questionnaire and group. In the future, a more robust group of participants numerically, a wider denominational net, and a broader geographic consideration will help benefit the research. Touching various denominations, which will also increase the number of participants, will allow the data to speak from multiple church histories, adding increased value to the results.

The online questionnaire and focus group were conducted at FHCWC; therefore, some biases may be present in the research answers. The nature of the participants' relationship with the church may have affected their responses, though complete honesty was encouraged while answering the questionnaire and focus group questions. The biases that may be present in the answers do not invalidate the participants' involvement and insight concerning the great tradition of Holy Eucharist.

Synthesis within Ministry Context

Simon Chan, who is aware of The Chicago Call and its attempt to heighten the awareness of church history in recovering certain aspects of the great tradition in evangelicalism, notes the significance of the divine liturgy in the life of the church in sharing in the Holy Eucharist. The one, holy, universal, and apostolic church would not understand the church without sharing in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist as the continuing reality of the life of Christ in His church. Chan says, “At the heart of the church’s practice is the mystery of the liturgy, culminating in the Eucharist, where we encounter the mystery of the triune God and his transforming grace. Worship is not just one of the many practices of the church; it is the church’s definitive practice. To be the church is to be the worshiping community responding to the revelation of the divine mystery.”⁹⁷ In this mystery of God’s grace, the church is realized as one bread and body in Christ Jesus through the witness of the Spirit. Lesslie Newbigin agrees by stating,

The body of Christ in which Christians are members is a visible body, entrance into which is marked by the visible sign of baptism. In the same way the centre of its ongoing life is the visible sign of broken bread together. As baptism marked Jesus’ entry into His earthly ministry, so the institution of the supper marked the consummation of it...He took bread and wine, told them, ‘This is my body given for you, this is my blood shed for you.’⁹⁸

Jesus prayed an *epiclesis* over His church that it would be one as He and the Father are one by and through the Spirit (John 17: 22-23). For some Christians, the unity of the church is fully expressed in the sharing of the Eucharist after the preaching of the Word. Paul embraces this

⁹⁷ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 93.

⁹⁸ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 67.

model and asserts that it should be enjoyed by the church, which is Christ's body (1 Cor 10: 16-17).

The Scriptures capture the importance of sharing in the Eucharist and its impact upon the worshiping community as the body of Christ. As outlined in the biblical witness, the church is called to eat and drink the body and blood of Christ, commanded by Christ, as it is food and drink to eternal life (John 6:54-56). Jesus has offered Himself to His church as life-giving food; His church is to offer the Word as the bread of life to the world.

The primary goal of this project was to highlight the significance of the Eucharist as necessary for the church and its formative activity by the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and the impact upon the church when the Eucharist is not shared within the worshiping community. Baptism has often been mentioned in response to the answers given by the online survey and focus group participants. Though baptism was not a primary focus of this project, baptism is a peripheral factor in this project and vital to the recovery of the great tradition. The researcher's objectives include (1) Research will be formatted into a resource that can be used by other churches, pastors, and ministry leaders. (2) Research will be developed into a teaching and training curriculum for other churches, pastors, and ministry leaders. (3) An additional teaching tool for other churches, pastors, and ministry leaders on how to build a liturgy that can be contextualized for their targeted audience will be developed.

Summary

This project, along with its research, sought to answer its primary research question: Should the Holy Eucharist serve as vital in the life of the fellowship of the Church? Constructing a

framework for detailing the significance of practicing the eucharist in the church was done through a vast consideration of biblical and theological materials, a literature review, and a human subject's study. With the results gathered from the research, a model for a liturgically sacramental worshipping community that is contextually aware and interested in recovering the great tradition, this research can serve as a developing tool.

The Biblical and theological materials act as the ground for beginning to answer the question for the research. The words and activities of Christ at the Last Supper, along with the revelation of Apostle Paul, further contend for the validity of the research. The literature review that interacted with the Biblical and theological materials agreed and disagreed with the information used to support the research question and will help when constructing the training curriculum.

Each respondent is committed to understanding what each question asks, and their commitment is rooted in Scripture, either read or heard. Some participants could articulate their beliefs about baptism and the eucharist based on Scripture and cited certain Scripture(s) that grounded their ideas. Others did not mention Scripture, but their answers referred to Scriptural evidence. Some participants had a sense of church history in their responses. The use of the words "tradition," "handed down," and "universal" when referring to the Church and what it believes highlighted a possible fundamental knowledge of church history. Even with a shallow sense of church history, the context of the participant's answers was shortsighted and ethnically Black.

Each person answered (if they could) based on their knowledge base. Based on the answers given, the online questionnaire and focus group answers were rooted in what their church experiences have taught them. Though some participants were too young to know

anything about FBC –or were not members of the Church yet– the answers given by those who are now growing up in FHCWC reflect those raised in FBC. The answers mirrored the historic teaching of FBC before they were either born or old enough to embrace and understand the teachings. This cascading of information from one generation to another is a church tradition. Though certain people were not present to receive the teaching, they were still impacted by the strength of the practices taught or embodied by a previous generation of worshippers in the church. The traditions of FBC and FHCWC are not “bad,” but through the focus group and online questionnaire responses, there is an evident knowledge gap concerning the great tradition. The answers in the online questionnaire and the focus group had more of an evangelical understanding of Scripture and how the Godhead interacts with and animates the universal Church.

The captured data from the twenty-three participants of the online questionnaire and the nine participants of the focus group showed a deficit in knowledge of the great tradition of the Holy Eucharist. The online questionnaire and focus group highlighted (1) FBC/FHCWC does function in concert with the great tradition at times, and there is a lack of awareness of participation in the great tradition during those times. (2) FHCWC lacks sufficient knowledge of the great tradition and fellowships without the historical traditions handed down by Christ and His apostles. The strengths of the survey and focus group answers were the result of longevity in ministry, experience in the ministry, and a broader understanding of the great tradition. The weaknesses in the questionnaire answers were due to the lack of historical knowledge of FBC/FHCWC and the failure to adequately answer questions in the survey and focus group.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The church is broad, deep, and ancient in its history and experiences in the human context. From the Acts 2 narrative to the present, the church universal has experienced councils, synods, and the teachings of the Fathers to determine what she believes and why. The church's apologetics were accomplished by and in the church, for the church, and to safeguard the church from false teachings from within (1 Tim 6). Many teachings were handed down by the Lord, such as the Beatitudes or the Sermon on the Mount discourse (Matt 5), how to pray (Luke 11), and experiencing life through eating of His body and drinking His blood, which has been titled Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist (John 6).

For over two millennia, the church has been interested in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. For some Christian groups, the celebration of the Eucharist within the worshiping community is not considered necessary, nor should it be part of the regular liturgy of the church. For those groups, the Eucharist does not have comparable value to the preached word. Another challenge within the church is the topic of real presence: Are the elements changed into the body and blood of Christ or not? Though the church has and will likely continue to agree and disagree on the various aspects of the Holy Eucharist, the church can agree that the Lord communicated the Holy Eucharist to His apostles and His apostles to the church to be enjoyed until He returns

(Luke 22:18). Congar asserts that “Eucharist was celebrated and administered without waiting for them to be written, it is obvious that the faith of the Church goes far beyond what the texts contain.”⁹⁹ Scriptures contain the church's activity in full swing and in agreement with the command of Christ to eat and drink His body and blood, which is to be continued until the coming of Christ. Congar continues by saying,

This faith was formed and continues to be formed in the successive generation of Christians, from the Eucharist itself, taken as a present reality, celebrated in the Church according to tradition. In order to share the faith of the apostles on this point, and to believe exactly what they believed, it is not so much a matter of reading, studying and interpreting their written teaching, as of partaking, in our turn, of the Bread and Wine in which the apostles communicated (for the first time from the hands of our Lord), followed by the whole succession of generations after them.¹⁰⁰

Congar's attitude emotes and embodies the church's mind as transmitted by Christ and His apostles and serves as a motivating factor for the research of this project. The project aims to share the breadth and width of the Eucharist within the universal church and how it has impacted its spiritual formation for over two millennia. The project also focuses on uncovering the implications of sharing in the Eucharist within the life of Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center and how the sacrament has affected the church. The research project is scripturally grounded but also considers the voice of God throughout church history and highlights how the Lord spoke throughout the centuries of the church's formation.

⁹⁹ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 20.

Lessons Learned

The research project has yielded some important lessons:

First, Scripture is the guiderail for conversations about Holy Communion, also known as the Lord's Supper or Holy Eucharist. As the ground for the feast, Scripture gives the context in which the Eucharist is celebrated, who enjoys the celebration, and what happens during the blessing of the elements. Other theologically centered materials supported the biblical witness and secular works that agreed or had a dissenting voice towards the research and scripture.

Next, not all Christian groups view the Eucharist the same. Some Christian communities hold a perspective known as sacramental occasionalism, which views the Eucharist as nonessential to the Christian experience that can be enjoyed whenever the church assembles (1 Cor 11:25). Other Christian groups deem the Eucharist the center of all worship and celebrate it every time the worshipping community comes together.¹⁰¹ Some people even view the Eucharist as unnecessary in the life of the church and are indifferent when it is celebrated.

Thirdly, celebrating the Eucharist is another way the gospel is preached. Hans Boersma asserts, "Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we become a polycarpic congregation by offering ourselves up, by participating in the very sacrifice of Christ."¹⁰² Not only are Christians bearing fruit that exemplifies Christ, but they also share in and present the very life of Christ while participating in the eucharistic celebration. The broken bread and poured wine call to remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, which is the kerygma of the gospel.

¹⁰¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 15.

¹⁰² Boersma, *Eucharistic Participation*, 9.

Considerations for the Future

The recovery of the great tradition will introduce a global context into the local context of FHCWC, presenting a Church reflective of the Acts 2 model of men and women hearing the gospel message in their native tongues and embodying it through worship. FHCWC will experience the witness of the Spirit beyond the borders of a Black or White church. The great tradition brings the church to the Lord's Table where all can eat of the body and drink the blood of Christ through the witness of the Spirit.

The Word, the Spirit, and the Table are the elements within the great tradition that the church can celebrate, regardless of skin color or limits of denominational persuasion, and without the limitations of time and space. With at least considering real presence during the Eucharist, FHCWC can realize that the body of Christ is not relegated to a particular denomination or ethnic group. The body and blood of Christ have been offered to the world of the church as life-giving food.

The recovery of the Eucharist in the great tradition may deepen the formation and life of FHCWC. This recovery will not take anything away from the history of FHCWC nor the historic practices of FBC and FHCWC. However, the recovery of the great tradition will give a clearer understanding of the economy of the Godhead being known and realized in and among the worshiping community of FHCWC. Not only will the great tradition introduce FHCWC to the wealth of church history that rests behind them, but it will also take the scales off its past traditions, enabling FHCWC to appreciate the Church universally beyond the zip code of its present context.

Finally, during the research, baptism was introduced during the engagements with the human subjects. Though baptism is not the main focus of this project, it is one of the ingredients to recovering the great tradition and is often tethered to the Eucharist.

Limitations to the Project

The research project was limited because of the narrow community group surveyed and the limited resources made available. However, these factors did not affect the overall results gathered from the online questionnaire and focus group. Additional access to information and increased diversity for the online questionnaire and focus group would enhance the findings of the project.

The qualitative online questionnaire and focus group limited the research project. First, the focus group and online questionnaire were capped with a certain number of participants. Second, not all participants answered every question. Due to a lack of knowledge, certain questions were left unanswered. Thirdly, though the age of the population varied, the demographic pool was predominately represented by one ethnic group. Additionally, the church demographic was limited to those who were raised Baptist, directly or indirectly. Fourth, the online questionnaire and focus group questions did not include any theological information from the project, nor was there any other literature included in the questions from the project.

The resources were limited as a result of a few factors. The materials necessary to answer the online questionnaire and focus group questions more efficiently are not commonly used in many church settings. The lack of resources did not hinder the questions from being answered, but increased information would enhance the responses for the project. All participants who

participated in the online questionnaire and focus group did not participate in the formation session course offered at the church, which could have contributed to the lack of ability to answer certain questions.

After reviewing and considering the answers to the questions posed for the focus group session and the electronic questionnaire, there is a narrow understanding of the universal church and its range of historic influence. The context of FBC and FHCWC is that, historically, the church was not known to extend its worship beyond the borders of the Baptist church (for FBC) and nothing beyond the boundaries of the other church being Black (for both FBC and FHCWC). Due to the lack of exposure to the rest of the universal church, the responses reflect a truncated experience within the universal church's width, breadth, height, and depth.

Closing Remarks

This research project has been my journey for many years, one in which I am still partaking. Growing up as a preacher's kid (PK), I have always enjoyed being in church and participating in the church's life. Though I was raised in a Baptist context, I attended a Catholic school from second to tenth grade. I found some Catholic doctrines to conflict with my upbringing, but I was always intrigued by the priest and his activity at the Table. While at the Table of the Lord, I remember the priest raising the host and the chalice in the air in a motion foreign to my Baptist history. I was unaware that his activity at the Table introduced me to real presence. Consistent with this lifting, Pitre says that during the time of Jesus,

the priests in the Temple would elevate the Bread of the Presence so that the Israelites could “see” the Bread of the Face of God. So, too, the Church now elevates and venerates

the Eucharist, so that believers can contemplate the face of the Messiah, hidden under the appearances of bread and wine.¹⁰³

Furthermore, I was not Catholic but could share in the eucharistic celebration at every mass during the school year. In the Baptist tradition, I was taught that Holy Communion and its elements were only symbols of the body and blood of Christ through saltine crackers and grape juice. The Catholic mass began to introduce to me something more than a symbol or something that represented the body and blood of Christ. The symbol that I would be introduced to expressed itself and pointed to another reality by the witness of the Spirit in the *epiklesis*.¹⁰⁴

Many years after my Roman Catholic experiences, I met a Coptic Orthodox priest who became an instant friend. After being welcomed to a church service, he and I began to converse about the nature of the Eucharist and what I believed the bread and wine to be. At first, I answered based on my Baptist upbringing, but at that point, I was in a quandary. I was still trying to figure out what I believed in the Eucharist and how to reconcile my beliefs with my context. Along with my Orthodox friend, I had a long-standing relationship with friends involved with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and who believed in real presence in the Eucharist. I struggled with joining the Coptic or Ethiopian church, so I could enjoy what I believed about the eucharistic celebration without the fight to reconcile my heart in my present context at FHCWC.

One day, one of my sisters in the Lord sent me a video of a man I was trying to connect with for my research. I was not aware that this man lived in the same town as me and that his church was about 5 miles from FHCWC. By divine providence, the Lord connected me with

¹⁰³ Pitre. *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*. 193-194.

¹⁰⁴ Schmemmann. *The Eucharist*. 222.

Archbishop Emilio Alvarez, who, in one meeting, adopted me as a son and synthesized my heart and mind to my context. I did not have to leave FHCWC to fulfill my heart's desire! In the witness of the Spirit, I can contextualize the eucharistic feast with FHCWC and believe in real presence. Believing in real presence in the Holy Eucharist is not isolated to one Christian group. Real presence is part of the total corpus of the church to whoever chooses to believe.

Since taking over as senior pastor of FHCWC, I instituted the celebration of the Eucharist. We started once a month to get everyone used to the rhythm of the liturgy. We will move to more frequent participation in the sacrament in the coming year. Based on the feedback I have received from many of the parishioners, they love the form of the liturgy that continues in the worship experience without a break from the rest of the worship. Even the children are actively involved with sharing at the Table of the Lord, with smiles on their faces. During the feast, everyone is involved, with effortless participation. It is obvious that the Lord, by His Spirit, resides with us at the Table in worship.

I am still on my journey! The Lord has been faithful and has guided my steps in joining me to people and places that continue to feed my love for the Lord and His Bride. In my pursuit to love and know Christ, I also desire to love and know His Bride, the Church (Eph 5:25; Rev 19:7).

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APPENDIX

(Q1) Project Title: The Recovery of the Great Tradition at Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center

Investigator: Ernest Joh Eric Crocker, MTh.

Purpose: You have been considered to partake in a brief survey. You are asked to answer a series of questions to engage your perception of and knowledge of the great tradition.

Procedures: If you agree to participate, a link to the survey will be emailed to you.

Risks of Participation: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: There will be no personal benefit from your participation in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. The data collected will be in a password-protected laptop and will be kept in a locked office. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and well-being of people who participate in research.

This study involves the audio or video recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio or audio recording or the transcript. Only the research team will be able to listen (view) to the recordings.

The recordings will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this research.

Contacts:

Co-Investigator: Ernest Crocker - ejcrocker@seu.edu

Principal Investigator: Dr. Emilio Alvarez – ealvarez1679@yahoo.com

To contact the IRB, email IRB@seu.edu

Participant Rights: Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to discontinue your involvement in the research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty.

(Q2) Focus Group Questions: Round-Robin 1-4

- How do you define the Great Tradition?
- What are the traditions of FHCWC (formerly known as Friendship Baptist Church)?
- How do you define Water Baptism?
- How do you define Holy Eucharist (Communion)?

(Q3) Electronic Questionnaire: Questions 1-10

- How would you define Water Baptism?
- How would you define Holy Eucharist (Communion)?
- What were the traditions of Baptism and Holy Eucharist in Friendship Baptist Church?
- What are the traditions of Baptism and Holy Eucharist in Faith, Hope, and Charity Worship Center?
- Is Holy Eucharist vital to the life of the Church? If so, in what ways?
- What, if anything, do you know about the Great Tradition?
- In what way(s) is the Holy Spirit evident in Baptism?
- In what way(s) is the Holy Spirit evident in the Eucharist?
- During Eucharist, how would you define the elements given during the celebration?
- When you hear the word “catholic,” what do you think of?