The Eucharist and Social Justice: How the Liturgy Schools Us for Action
Workshop - SWLC
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Lex Orandi > Lex Credendi > Lex Vivendi/Agendi

Current Voice

“I could not stop staring at the fence with the altar on either side. Here we were gathered as one Body of Christ divided into two. While the Eucharist speaks of our oneness in Christ, of the One Bread and the One Cup, of inclusion, the fence speaks of the opposite — division and separation and exclusion.” [The Mass begins in the usual way with an entrance procession but it has to be adjusted given the wall separating the assembly. On both sides of the fence cross bearers lead the procession followed by the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the flags of both countries and, finally, items people carry when they try to cross — water, food, shoes and a backpack. He continues,] “I don’t know why, but when I saw the backpack and the shoes I could not stop crying. The Mass was bilingual with beautiful music. Someone read the first reading in Spanish from the Mexico side of the border. Then someone read in English from the U.S. side. I was continually struck by the absurdity of borders. One Body of Christ divided into two.” [A most moving and pathetic thing happens at the Kiss of Peace. People on both sides put their fingers through the chain link fence to touch the fingers of their sisters and brothers on the other side. Fr. Corpora did the same, touching the fingers of another man. He continues,] “I cannot describe what I experienced at that moment, perhaps the deepest longing I have ever known for justice, for peace, for unity, for acceptance….”, Joseph V. Corpora, CSC, “Concelebrating Mass at the Border,” Notre Dame Magazine, Autumn, 2010, 45.

Terms:
The Lord’s Supper
Eucharistic liturgy (Greek: Eucharistia and Leitourgia)
Mass (Latin: Missa)
Breaking of the Bread (Greek: Klassei tou artou)

Closing Rites: The General Instruction lists 4 elements in the closing rites:
a. Brief announcements, if they are necessary;
b. The priest’s greeting and blessing, which on certain days and occasions is enriched and expressed in the prayer over the People or another more solemn formula;
c. The dismissal of the people by the deacon or priest so that each may go out to do good works, praising and blessing God;
d. The kissing of the altar by the priest and the deacon, followed by a profound bow to the altar by the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers.
"Do you wish to honor the Body of Christ? Do not ignore Him outside where He suffers cold and nakedness. He who said, "This is my body" is the same One who said, "You saw Me hungry and you gave Me no food" and "Whatever you did for the least of My brothers, you did also for Me". What good is it if the Eucharistic Table is overloaded with golden chalices, when He is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying His hunger, and then, with what is left, you may adorn the altar as well. The temple of our afflicted neighbor's body is more holy than the altar of stone on which you celebrate the holy sacrifice. You are able to contemplate this altar everywhere, in the street and in the open squares." St. John Chrysostom, *In Evangelium S. Mattaei, hom.* 50:3-4: PG 58, 508-509.

"If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" ("yes, it is true!") and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, "the Body of Christ" and respond "Amen." Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true." St. Augustine, *Sermo 272*: PL 38,1247.

**Recent Papal Teachings**

“The Eucharist not only provides the interior strength needed for mission, but is also—in some places—its plan. For the Eucharist is a mode of being, which passes from Jesus into each Christian, through whose testimony it is meant to spread throughout society and culture.” Pope John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (October 7, 2004), 25.

“Give us this day our daily bread ... obliges us to do everything possible in cooperation with international, state and private institutions, to end or at least reduce the scandal of hunger and malnutrition.... The Christian laity, formed at the school of the Eucharist, are called to assume their specific political and social responsibilities.” Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 9.

“The Church urgently needs the deep breath of prayer, and to my great joy groups devoted to prayer and intercession, the prayerful reading of God’s word and the perpetual adoration of the Eucharist are growing at every level of ecclesial life. Even so, “we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the incarnation”. There is always the risk that some moments of prayer can become an excuse for not offering one’s life in mission; a privatized lifestyle can lead Christians to take refuge in some false forms of spirituality.” Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, 262.