CHAPTER XV

Eucharist and Globalization

JOHN P. HOGAN

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will attempt to relate Eucharist to globalization, the dominant problematic of our new century. I will also present some of the corresponding implications for cultural identity, pluralism, and social justice. Given the breadth of the issue, I can only hope to stimulate some questions and perhaps widen the scope of the Catholic eucharistic lens. Rather than look at many examples, I have chosen to look at the foundation of Eucharist and how it relates to globalization. I was prompted to this approach by Langdon Gilkey’s comment of many years ago that "the Eucharist needs no redirection... it is the center; but it needs... an infinite widening and extension over the whole earth."1

My approach has been formed from two perspectives. The first is my own career which has focused on third world development issues in a rapidly globalizing economy. My particular interest centers on the relationships that exist among religions, cultures, and development. The second perspective has to do with the crystallizing debate around the linkage between Eucharist and justice. My steps in pursuit of that linkage were quickened by Kathleen Hughes’ pointed question, "When Jesus said, ‘Do this in memory of me,’ what was the this he had in mind?" John Coleman, S.J. recently reminded us that social justice finds its roots in and is fed by the eucharistic imagination. He adds, "How then have we so lost our way that such claims can seem provocative"? Eucharist is the essence of Christian praxis, the fulfillment of Baptism, a thankful yes to Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection which incorporates us as a spirited community to do as he did—seek and build the Kingdom of God. Indeed, this understanding runs throughout our tradition. What went wrong?

Could it be that we have let a too individualistic and therapeutic emphasis on "real presence" obscure the deeper meaning of Christ’s presence and action in us as a community of believers? St. Augustine said, "We eat the body of Christ to become the body of Christ."3 What in the world might that mean today?

To a great extent, globalization has been a western big business and particularly U.S.-dominated process. However, that does not mean that if human concerns, and particularly concerns for the poor, are brought to the fore that a greater common good cannot come from the process. That is the message Pope John Paul II creatively set forth in Ecclesia in America. In response to globalization, the Pope counter-proposed the "globalization of solidarity."4

Traces of all of the received meanings of Eucharist, in the face of globalization, need to be teased out: global covenant community, thanksgiving, sacrifice, reconciliation, table ministry and the banquet of human destiny. If a few little pieces of the globe, bread and wine, "fruit of the vine and work of human hands," can be Christ’s presence, then so can the rest of the universe. As Michael Himes tells us, "The Eucharist is the tip of the iceberg. It is the first step in the transubstantiation of all creation...the destiny of the universe."5

When and how does Eucharist call us to be open to the positive potential of the emerging global economy
and culture? On the other hand, when and how might Eucharist be a real symbol of a needed resistance to a global homogenization of local cultures that desecrates the environment and discards human beings as "collateral damage" of economic "progress?" How might Eucharist provide the theological basis for Catholic social teaching on solidarity, subsidiarity and the option for the poor? How might it be coupled with a discernment process that rests on the eucharistic imagination, builds community, and takes action on behalf of justice?

With the dominant problematic of globalization in mind, the following sections will try to get to the "this" in Jesus’ mandate. How does it relate to the cultural identity, economic and environmental issues of globalization? Section one will highlight St. Paul’s treatment of Eucharist in I Corinthians as a basis for solidarity; section two will present some examples of globalization with implications for Eucharist; section three will sketch steps for a critical eucharistic discernment process; a short conclusion follows.

ST. PAUL: DISCERNING THE BODY OF CHRIST

For most Americans, the age of globalization with its computers, cell phones and stock market seems to have arrived whether we like it or not. What does sharing the body and blood of Christ say to this new uncharted course? Eucharist means gratitude, thanksgiving, a commitment to take on the attitude of Jesus toward his Father. How does Eucharist call us to stewardship and global solidarity with the poor?

The New Testament is replete with stories of invitations to homes and fellowship meals. There were lots of dinner parties. At these affairs, Jesus can be heard constantly reminding his friends to be "thankful." He also used such occasions to reach out to hookers and hustlers. One thing jumps out: participants in the dinners and picnics are all treated as equals; all receive the same meal. There was no first class!

In like manner, Jesus’ last meeting with his disciples was a meal of thanksgiving and blessing that stretched back to earlier covenants and particularly the passover from slavery. However, this time, he changed the blessing before he broke the bread, saying, "This is my body." In effect, he was saying that this bread is not only a reminder of the passover bread our ancestors ate, this bread is me. He announced that "this wine was his blood, the blood of the new covenant." The participants in the new covenant became blood relatives, not only of Jesus but of one another; and with that comes responsibility for the extended family. The new covenant has some demanding terms. In John’s Gospel, a foreshadowing of those terms is laid out when the master washes the feet of his disciples. He reverses the whole social order and scandalizes his closest followers, especially Peter.

Two clear lines emerge. The first is table ministry as a foretaste of the eschatological banquet, "a taste of eternity in time," and the second, the memorial of his redemptive sacrifice. Both lines have been beautifully depicted on film. Babette’s Feast is a parable of thanksgiving and grace. God’s presence arrives among the stern, pious community in the form of a woman’s free gift—a gourmet meal, a feast. Although grace comes as it always does, free of charge, no strings attached, on the house—the participants in the feast are changed.

The sacrificial element of Eucharist has also been graphically illustrated in the life of Archbishop Romero. That too has been captured on film. He ended his last homily with the words, "May this immolated Body and his Blood sacrificed for the world nourish us, that we may give our body and our blood to suffering and pain as Christ did—not for self but to bring about justice and peace for our people." Both examples speak to our concerns today, the deeper meaning of "real presence" and the "this" in a global context.

I would like to turn now to St. Paul’s treatment of the eucharistic celebration in I Corinthians 11:17-34. John Haughey does an excellent job of unpacking that text. The lessons to be learned from Paul clearly
apply to our task. Here Paul is seeking to get to the root of the insensitive behavior of the Corinthians. He aims for the deeper meaning of the "real presence" as the body of Christ identified with the community. "Defective perception of the mystery of the Lord’s presence in the community led to defective internalization, and, in turn, to deficient projection or social behavior." The Corinthians, in spite of their belief in the real presence, didn’t get it. Their understanding was very much tied up with an "individuated Christ." There was little or no grasp of "being members of one another in a whole which is his sacred presence..." Paul’s concern gets behind interpersonal behavior as well as racial, cultural, national, economic, ideological and social divisions. Maybe we still suffer from the Corinthian myopia!

Had the Corinthians understood Eucharist as the presence that unites members in the body and creates a single entity, they would have realized how sacrilegious their behavior toward one another was. We can only imagine what it might have been toward non-Christians! "A nascent gnosticism was developing in Corinth which had some portion of the community of believers verticalizing and spiritualizing their faith in Christ." This manifested itself both in inflated egos and lack of concern for the less educated, the stranger, the poor, and the slave. Then as now, Jesus’ humanity seems to have posed more of a problem than his divinity.

Paul invites the Corinthians to a discernment process of self-examination around Eucharist. "Their sin was not a lack of faith in Jesus... They were in error about who they were, because they were wrong about who he was now. Their belief was in a disembodied Jesus. They believed in one not bodied the way he said he would be." Paul is reminding the community that Jesus said he would be there in the poor, the prisoner, the foreigner but he is also raising the trinitarian dimension, "...that they all may be one in us..."{John 17:21}.

If the above textual reasoning is accurate, as it appears to be, Jesus’ mandate would then be: "Do this again and again by remembering me at your table fellowship. But you remember me if you know my presence with you is through one another whom I am fashioning into so many members of my own body." In Paul’s view, the private, individual possession of Christ comes at no cost and is selfish. Rather, he understood Eucharist as participation in a very concrete, communal way. Haughey refers to this as "relational wholeness" which makes us Christ’s body and members of one another. "The knitting together of individuals would be their redemption and at the same time would be the beginning of the recapitulation of all systems in Christ."14

This understanding of Eucharist offers intriguing food for thought for realizing Christ’s presence on a global scale. Paul sees the concrete working out of real presence in a community of people who are open and identify not with the few, the like-believers, but with all—with Christ himself in the whole body. But there is great movement and freedom within that body—precisely because "They were Christ’s body." To grasp what Paul seems to be saying is startling! Together we are Christ! We are one with the "social flesh" of the word of God. Christ’s death and resurrection can now become the determinants of our lives. If we are truly members of his body, he is now us.16

How should this view of Eucharist as "relational wholeness" affect us? If we are one in the Spirit—no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free—what does that call us to in relation to the emerging global system and those who people it—especially the poor? Should our "corporate" presence, in some way, be a challenge to that other corporate presence—the multinational corporation? Paul’s views clearly touched the political, economic and environmental issues. He had profound respect for all created reality and was not afraid of the local, the social, the foreign, the body.

Clearly this approach to eucharistic presence puts theological flesh on the theoretical bones of Catholic social teaching—solidarity, subsidiarity, and the option for the poor. It provides the "body"—head, hands, feet—for the Church as a transnational, global actor. It is a much more "real" presence than a privatized,
individuated Jesus in a host. If we can realize this "relational wholeness," we could be a lot more effective in terms of global social ecological systems. But first, what kinds of situations might that body walk into?

EMBODYING THE GLOBALIZATION OF SOLIDARITY

In addressing the multicultural and multiracial aspects of the western hemisphere in *Ecclesia in America*, John Paul II bids us to travel three paths: to conversion, to communion, and to solidarity. The globalization of solidarity is the key to his vision. Solidarity is a term with a rather long history in Catholic social teaching. Theologically, it reflects the ontological unity of humankind redeemed as a new creation in Christ. It signifies the responsibility of all to stand with and promote human rights, economic and social development, and environmental concerns. It calls for a special commitment to those in need—in a very real sense, an identification with them. John Paul’s linkage of solidarity with globalization is truly ingenious and a challenging call to American Catholics.

The Church in America is called not only to promote greater integration between nations, thus helping to create an authentic globalized culture of solidarity, but also to cooperate with every legitimate means in reducing the negative effects of globalization, such as the domination of the powerful over the weak, especially in the economic sphere, and the loss of the values of local cultures in favor of a misconstrued homogenization.17

Without defense of the poor and marginalized, both individuals and nations, globalization could end up being merely a new and perhaps more deadly form of colonialism. The Pope’s analysis of global solidarity unfolds in light of foreign debt, corruption, drugs, the arms race, environmental degradation, racial and cultural discrimination, and immigration. These problems—the dehumanizing outcomes of a misguided economic globalization—lead to a culture of death where the powerful can relegate certain peoples to the dustbin of history.18

This is a direct challenge to the American Church, but what I find missing is a theological, sacramental and liturgical base that unites the paths of conversion, communion and solidarity. The path to solidarity would be greatly enhanced and supported theoretically by applying Paul’s notion of bodily eucharistic presence in the sense of "relational wholeness" to the community of believers and to the whole globe.

In order to understand better the current global context, especially from the perspective of the poor, I would like to turn now to a few snapshots of globalization from Africa and Latin America.

I begin with a case study from Nigeria: "The Ogoni and Oil."19 You hear the same story in every home you enter. You see it in every corner of the villages you visit. The pitiable and scandalous tale is the same: "My once productive farmland," a farmer laments, "now lays fallow, barren—forever infertile. It is as though concrete has been poured over and cemented the surface of my means of livelihood. Large chunks of tar cover many of the farms." This predicament is not the plight of only the farmers in Ogoniland. The fishermen and women also suffer. The rivers are red, covered with "blood" from oil spills. The fish are dead or can no longer produce offspring.

The Ogoni are subsistence farmers or fishermen that live in the coastal delta of Nigeria, the area of the country’s oil production fields. Nigeria obtains ninety percent of its foreign earnings from oil and has contracted European and American firms to manage its oil fields. Oil pollution has had devastating impact on the territory’s agricultural land and rivers. The effect on families, children, and the work force has been disastrous. Neither government nor the corporations have done anything to improve conditions. Unemployment has increased; no hospitals, schools, water systems, or roads have been built. Employees of the foreign firms live in spacious quarters and employ Ogoni as servants. In spite of their oil-rich land,
Ogoni men and women consider themselves a "forsaken" people. A popular saying in Nigeria, one which a person might say to an enemy, is "may oil be discovered in your backyard"—a blessing turned sour. Moreover, when a non-violent movement was organized to address these concerns to the government, its leader was assassinated in 1995 by the president-dictator. Oil profits continue to flow out to Europe and the United States.

It is a sad parallel, but, from the perspective of many African theologians, the extractive function of the oil industry in some ways mirrors the role of Eucharist. One could apply Cameroonian theologian Jean-Marc Ela’s twenty-year-old comment on the Eucharist to the plight of the Ogoni: "the rigid rules on the eucharistic matter [legislating wheat bread and grape wine] oblige the African churches to ‘resign themselves to being a tool for the prosperity of someone else’s commerce.”

This case study can only give a hint of the tremendous complexity involved in the globalization process, as well as the devastating impact on family life, culture and the environment. Since Americans, for the most part, are the winners in the globalization race, it is hard for us to hear that side of the story.

To a great extent, our ability to identify with the poor and the local from our own context of affluence and the global is a eucharistic question. If, indeed, the "Eucharist is where Catholics are educated," we must move beyond our current grasp of real presence as limited to the elements of bread and wine and widen our scope to Paul’s embodied eucharistic presence in the community—a "relational wholeness" that stretches around the globe.

Unfortunately, our recent global track record has not been good. Indeed some situations might indicate a failure of Eucharist. One need only think of Chile under Pinochet, Central America, Rwanda before and during the genocide, Northern Ireland and the Balkans. All were situations where Eucharist became symbolic of division and exclusion rather than unity and inclusion. How many opportunities for reconciliation and forgiveness were missed? And perhaps when we look at our own issues of segregation, the plight of our cities, and tax structures, the global neglect of the poor comes closer to home. Paul’s concerns are both local and global. "Examine yourself, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves." (I Cor 11:28-31) If not properly discerned, Eucharist can be dangerous to our health!

William T. Cavanaugh writing of Torture and Eucharist in Chile draws on the writings of Henri de Lubac and Dom Gregory Dix to indicate the dire effects of an overly individualized concept of Eucharist. This had the effect of isolating individuals and rendering the Church ineffective in dealing with oppression until an understanding of the "true" body of Christ became present in the community. Only when this presence was lived in the community would the Church find the courage to stand up to torture.

A renewed sense of Paul’s embodied Eucharist is needed to infuse a global Catholicism capable of being incorporated in each culture yet open to the potential goods of a global culture. Robert Schreiter writing on The New Catholicity for a global age calls for a theology of culture constructed on a foundation of intercultural communication and hermeneutics. He points out that this theology of culture started with Gaudium et Spes and has continued with John Paul II. Two central doctrines provide key resources for such a theology of culture. First, the trinity, "The mission of the Second and Third Persons in the world, and God’s reconciliation of the cosmos to the divine Being are themes that take on new significance in a globalized world." Second, the Paschal Mystery provides Christians with a "master narrative" for an epoch without master narratives. "The passion narrative itself brims with post-colonial ironies of betrayal, denial, mistaken identifications, and abandonment. And it ends in great surprise.

I fully agree with Schreiter on the importance of these two themes for a theological response to
globalization. However, I would hasten to add Eucharist understood as a visible sign of Christ’s bodily presence expressing "relational wholeness." We reenact our master narrative every Sunday. Without a broader understanding of the central act of Christian worship, we run the growing risk of aiding and abetting the growing separation of the rich and poor—the Church of the rich and the Church of the poor. Indeed, Eucharist is where Catholics are educated.

I will close this section with a brief account of Eucharist as applied to globalization—in this case, resistance to globalization because of its impact on the poor. This example comes from El Salvador. Cavanaugh offers a cogent illustration of how and when Eucharist might function as resistance to a negative globalization which compresses space and time and, under the pretense of a united world, enslaves the poor. He quotes a homily of Father Rutilio Grande of El Salvador.

The Lord God gave us... a material world for all, without borders... "I'll buy half of El Salvador. Look at all my money. That'll give me the right to it" No! That’s denying God! ... Christ has good reason to talk about his kingdom as a meal. He talked about meals a lot. And he celebrated one the night before his supreme sacrifice... And he said that this was the great memorial of the redemption: a table shared in brotherhood, where all have their position and place... This is the love of a communion of sisters and brothers that smashes and casts to the earth every sort of barrier and prejudice and that one day will overcome hatred itself.

One month later, Grande was murdered. Archbishop Romero declared, to the disgust of the rich and the military, that only one mass—the funeral mass—would be celebrated in the Archdiocese that Sunday. The elites were outraged. But Romero was using the power of the Eucharist to collapse spatial barriers separating rich and poor not by simply declaring the Church universal and united but rather by calling the faithful together to one particular location around one altar and expressing the Catholica in one place at one time.

Hence the body of Christ has to be properly discerned. Otherwise Christ is betrayed. This perhaps helps to explain something of the failures of Eucharist mentioned above. In the face of globalization, the body might call for support or resistance, depending on local circumstances. If our eucharistic celebrations are to have anything to say to our new global situation, they will have to be accompanied by a reflective communal discernment process. The next section introduces that process.

**CRITICAL DISCERNMENT AND RELATIONAL WHOLENESS**

**WHOLENESS**

The jury is still out as to whether globalization will prove a blessing or curse to humanity. Thus far, however, it as had a killing effect on the world’s poor, local cultures, and the environment. In a sense globalization has become a liturgy writ-large—with matching vestments, rituals, music, drama, food and text. It has its rubrics, hierarchy, acolytes and parishioners—only the poor are left out.

What I propose is an understanding of Eucharist, with a corresponding discernment process which allows, even compels, the believing community to become aware, get involved, and exert influence on the globalization problematic with its implications for economic and environmental issues. The "relational wholeness" understanding of Eucharist provides the identity and work plan for us as a Church to travel the path of conversion, communion, and solidarity with the poor. Christ’s presence is global, therefore, we as a community are global and should so act. In a very real sense, we should feel the suffering of the Ogoni! After all, their plight, to a great extent, is generated by our oil consumption, but, more importantly, the Ogoni and we are one in Jesus’ body.
Solidarity needs to be more than a principle and an attractive slogan. For it to really reflect the ontological unity of humankind redeemed in Christ, our embodiment in him and him in us needs to be preached and reflected on during liturgy, emphasized in the prayer of the faithful, and discussed in communal discernment sessions. Such discernment needs to include honest, open interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Whether we like it or not, "global" is in.27 The Church’s articulation of Christ’s presence and uniqueness needs to move beyond the negative defensiveness of Dominus Jesus.28

"Eucharist makes real the presence of Christ both in the elements and in the body of believers."29 The majority of Catholics would probably agree with the former but scratch their heads at the latter. For too many of us, Eucharist is an interior retreat—a "spiritual" thing. A corollary of that is the virtual absence of liturgy and Eucharist in official Catholic social teaching, as well as the relatively recent separation of liturgy from social thought and activism.30 (A strange twist, indeed, a narrowly defined reversal in this trend, is the recent threat, of some U.S. bishops, to deny the Eucharist to some American politicians over the abortion issue.) Such moves are, for the most part, serious betrayals, not only of the liturgical movement but also of the New Testament and patristic traditions. Such moves only serve to deny the Eucharist its rightful educational and inclusive role.

Moreover, I would contend that an inductive, practical discernment process has to be built into our eucharistic celebrations that brings out the communal, bodily nature of eucharistic presence and relates that presence to justice issues in the global age. We need to begin with the experience of the local community. How do we experience community? How do we experience globalization? How do others around us or across town experience it? What about others around the world? How and why does being the body of Christ call us to seek solidarity in this situation? Are we in need of conversion from our habits, way of life, way of thinking? How do we reflect on our own experience when we have pulled it together into a personal and communal story? How do we judge our story, our situation? Do we need to change? Can we act on our judgment? What action should we take? What do we do about the situation?

Obviously, the above is a shorthand version of Lonergan’s method: experience, understanding, judgment, decision (action). It is not the only discernment process which could serve our purposes, but it is one that maps clearly the cognitive and hermeneutical process and has been put to excellent use in examining the globalization process at the Woodstock Theological Center in Washington.31

This process is akin to the discernment to which Paul was calling the Corinthians but broadened to global horizons. In the Eucharist, we "put on Christ" and relive his story, and, in doing that, discover our own. This is what we are called to do at every Eucharist. Outcomes of the process might take many forms: support for the UN, fair trade practices, and even, one day, a global tax; or, at other times, it might mean aiding the resistance to a crass globalization process that tramples on local cultures and the poor. Decisional actions might run the gamut from advocacy to volunteer efforts, to parish twinning, to support for CCHD and CRS efforts.

Such an approach implemented within the context of eucharistic presence as "relational wholeness" could ignite communities to take up some of the difficult socio-economic questions. The stock market, WTO, energy policy, sweatshops, AIDS, drugs, racial, religious and ethnic conflict, immigration, and global warming are defining our globe. Distance no longer cleanses dividends. Since, so far at least, we are the "winners," we need to understand our role as members of the body of Christ and our responsibilities to the "losers." That might be what Augustine meant by "We eat the body of Christ to become the body of Christ."

CONCLUSION

I readily admit that this broadening of horizons is a tall order for pastors, liturgists, religious educators,
and parishioners, but it seems to me absolutely necessary given today’s world. We take on Jesus’ body and re-live his life every time we participate in the eucharistic liturgy. At the same time, we find ourselves in a world thrown together, culturally, religiously, economically, and environmentally. Unfortunately, as Haughey points out, we seem to continue to follow "a Christ who looks more like the one our Corinthian forebears concocted than the one Paul preached." We allow Paul the eschatological horizons pointing to the future but fail to see that "they are also political [cultural, social, economic, environmental] vistas pointing to the present and to possibilities in the Christ mystery we have even stopped imagining."32

Together—globe-wide—we are the Christ—members of one another. The problems of the Ogoni, as well as, the U.S. poor, are our problems as well. To mirror our eucharistic people of faith image with socially responsible global citizenship, we need a Eucharist that calls us not only to inner change but also to a different set of relationships with each other, a different relationship to nature, an openness to work with other religions and secular organizations, and a willingness to discuss and discern life’s tough issues in the context of global justice.

I am convinced that, for the overwhelming majority of Catholics, education to solidarity, subsidiarity, and the option for the poor will not happen unless it takes place within the context of Eucharist. "The whole of Catholic praxis is training in sacramental vision."33 These are uncharted waters but eucharistic liturgy provides a compass pointing to the "infinite widening and extension over the whole earth" that Gilkey mentioned.

Christ’s eucharistic bodily presence allows us to take risks and calls us to these tasks. As Gutierrez reminded us many years ago, "the Church should rise to the demands of the moment..." He added wryly, "Some chapters of theology can be written only afterwards."34

NOTES


Himes, Doing the Truth in Love, 129. For anaphora, preface, and epiclesis, see Catechism, 34 no. 1353.

ibid., 124-125.


Ibid., 109.

Ibid., 113.

Ibid., 117.

Ibid., 120. See Haughey, 118-120 where he refers to William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, I Corinthians: A New Translation (The Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) for discussion on the "uses of the neuter demonstrative this."

Haughey, 123.

Ibid., 125.

Ibid., 127.


Ibid., no. 63. Hogan, 21.

This case study is taken from the "Global Economy and Local Cultures" project ongoing at Woodstock Theological Center, Washington, DC. The project works with Jesuit research centers around the world and is managed by Gasper LoBiondo, S.J. and Rita Rodriguez.


24 Ibid., 60. For one of the early theological references to globalization, see Gaudium et Spes no. 54.


27 Schreiter, New Catholicity 11-27.

28 CDF, Dominus Jesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (Vatican City: CDF, August 6, 2000).

29 Cavanaugh, Torture and Eucharist, 205.


32 Haughey, 111.

33 Himes and Himes, Fullness of Faith, 113. At their June 2001 meeting, the U.S. Bishops drafted and adopted a statement, The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers (Washington, DC: USCC, July 2001). The statement emphasizes the theory of "transubstantiation" and is apparently a response to concerns raised by a survey about "real presence" in

the eucharistic bread and wine. There is only brief mention of Christ’s presence in the scriptural word and "assembly" (no. 13). See also Jerry Filteau, "Bishops explain Christ’s real presence in Eucharist," Catholic Standard (June 21, 2001) 3.


Last Revised 07-Feb-09 04:48 PM.