

THE EUCHARIST,
HIGHLIGHT OF THE CHURCH AND THE SOURCE OF EVANGELISATION

I congratulate Bishop Hoogmartens, Dr. Missoten and the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament for organising this wonderful event to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the Eucharistic Miracle of Hasselt. I thank them too for the invitation to speak during this afternoon Symposium. My title is *The Eucharist, Highlight of the Church and Source of Evangelisation*. So, first, evangelisation, specifically, the new evangelisation; then, the human person as *homo liturgicus*; and last, the Eucharist as the source of mission.

1. Evangelisation and New Evangelisation

So first, evangelisation. Evangelisation (ευαγγελιον ‘good news’ and ευαγγελιζομαι ‘to announce good news’) essentially means spreading the Gospel, that is, introducing people to a personal, transformative encounter with Jesus Christ and through Him with the Blessed Trinity, proclaiming the *kerygma* of Christ’s death and resurrection, and explaining its meaning and value for people today, for individuals, groups, institutions and cultures. Evangelisation has been the Church’s constant activity from the beginning, originating from Christ’s missionary mandate: “Go; make disciples of all the nations; baptise them ... and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you” (Mt 28: 19-20). In his 1974 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI declared that

“evangelising is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise, that is, to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace.”¹

However, over the last three decades, the Church has been calling Christians to the work of *new* evangelisation (‘NE’), an evangelisation, in the well-known words of St. John Paul II, “new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression.”² In 21C, there is a new situation, not least in Europe and North America, a secularised, pluralist, consumer culture, in which Christianity and its values, once the basis of society, is increasingly marginal. There are now vast sectors of contemporary culture, from politics, business and economics to medicine, the arts and the human sciences, almost entirely ‘unbaptised’.³ This new culture, if the Gospel message is to be effectively communicated, requires treatment with new forms of evangelisation.

¹ Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in H. Denzinger *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (43rd Edition) ed. P. Hünermann (San Francisco, Ignatius Press: 2010) DH 4573

² See John Paul II ‘The Task of the Latin American Bishop’ in *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659-62. The occasion was a discourse to an assembly of CELAM in Port-au-Prince on 9th March 1983. Cf. R. Fisichella *The New Evangelisation: Responding to the Challenge of Indifference* (Leominster, Gracewing: 2012) 8f

³ Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* (London, CTS: 2013) 176f. The proclamation of the Gospel is meant to reform social and economic structures, to influence culture, to lead to the service of the poor and needy, to baptise the contexts in which people think, act, live and work. As John Paul II once said, the greatest challenge of our age comes from a growing separation between faith and reason, between the Gospel and culture. See John Paul II *Inter Munera Academicarum* 2, available on-line at www.vatican.va (July 2015)

The term NE can at times be complex, even watery. In some of his magisterium, for instance in his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and in the 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis*, John Paul II used the term NE to mean ‘re-evangelisation,’ particularly the re-evangelisation of those areas of the world such as Europe that had once been evangelised, but where nowadays the home fires have gone out.⁴ At other times, he used the term ‘evangelisation’ to refer to a range of activities. Thus in *Catechesi Tradendae*, he differentiated three moments or stages in the process of evangelisation: (1) pre-evangelisation, the initial proclamation of the *kerygma* arousing faith and calling the listener to conversion and discipleship;⁵ (2) catechesis and formation, becoming a catechumen; and (3) the celebration of the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) and insertion into the community and mission of the Church.⁶ Evangelisation thus refers to the whole process: initial proclamation, catechesis and sacramentalisation. Commenting on these three stages, derived from the Early Church and reflected in the modern *Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Scott Hahn has used the image of falling-in-love, engagement - couples getting to know each other and their families - and marriage, the start of family life together.⁷

NE is most evidently about new methods and new expressions. Its proximate goal is the individual; its ultimate goal is to leaven culture. It implies self-evangelisation, Christians themselves being evangelised, a life-long, continuous endeavour, as well as Christians reaching out to others of good-will, open to hearing the Message. NE is also directed to the vast numbers of non-practising Catholics. Yet St. John Paul also spoke of a new ardour. In this sense, NE seems to mean a return to the original experience of faith, a transforming encounter with the Person of Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, with a renewed sense of being called to discipleship within His Body, the Church. St. Paul said, “life to me is Christ” (Phil 1: 21); the “life I live now in this body I live in faith, faith in the Son of God, who loved me and who sacrificed Himself for my sake” (Gal 2: 20). This ‘experiential’ element in NE is central to all recent manuals of pastoral renewal.⁸ Sherry Weddell, in her epochal *Forming Intentional Disciples*, argues that NE is about discovering or re-discovering the centrality of the Person of Jesus Christ and His personal invitation to discipleship, and enkindling a passion and desire to invite others into that relationship.

⁴ See Fisichella *The New Evangelisation* 20-23. See John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio* 33 (DH 4893) and Congregation for the Clergy *General Directory for Catechesis* (London, CTS: 1997) 58-59.

⁵ See USCCB *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, USCCB: 2005) 49-50.

⁶ See John Paul II *Catechesi Tradendae* (London, CTS: 1979) 18-25

⁷ S. Hahn *Evangelizing Catholics: A Mission Manual for the New Evangelization* (Huntington In, Our Sunday Visitor: 2014)

⁸ See, for instance, J. Mallon *Divine Renovation: Bringing your Parish from Maintenance to Mission* (New London CT, Twenty-Third Publications: 2014) and *Divine Renovation Guidebook: A Step-by-step Manual for Transforming Your Parish* (New London CT, Twenty-Third Publications: 2016); M. White and T. Corcoran *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost and Making Church Matter* (Notre Dame, Ave Maria: 2013), *Tools for Rebuilding* (Notre Dame, Ave Maria: 2014), *Rebuilding Your Message: Practical Tools to Strengthen Your Preaching and Teaching (Rebuilt Parish Book)* (Notre Dame, Ave Maria: 2015) and *The Rebuilt Field Guide: Ten Steps for Getting Started (A Rebuilt Parish Book)* (Notre Dame, Ave Maria: 2016); C. Wesley *Rebuilding Youth Ministry: Ten Practical Strategies for Catholic Parishes (A Rebuilt Parish Book)* (Notre Dame, Ave Maria: 2015); S. Weddell *Forming Intentional Disciples. The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, Our Sunday Visitor: 2012), *Becoming a Parish of Intentional Disciples* (Huntington, Our Sunday Visitor: 2015) and *Fruitful Discipleship: Living the Mission of Jesus in the Church and the World* (Huntington, Our Sunday Visitor: 2017); W. Simon *Great Catholic Parishes: A Living Mosaic - How Four Essential Practices Make Them Thrive* (Notre Dame, Ave Maria: 2016); and M. Kelly *Rediscover Jesus* (North Palm Beach, Beacon: 2015).

So NE is markedly Christocentric and personal. For many older Catholics, reared on the changes of the post-Vatican II period, this suggests a changed mind-set. For them, it is easier to talk about the Church than the salvific reality and experience upon which the Church is based. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis put it like this:

“I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her [own] self-preservation.”

But, he went on, this renewal of structures is about friendship with Jesus; it can

“only be understood ... as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth, and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with Himself.”⁹

In the past, great emphasis was laid on building up the Church, on structures, on the parish and on lay ministries. Clergy became service providers and chaplains to the Catholic community, the faithful consumers of spiritual goods, with parishes focused on meeting pastoral needs. NE, however, suggests a shift of focus back from the Church of the Lord to the Lord of the Church, and a shift from concern with the Church’s internal life to apostolate in the world. This is the essence of ‘missionary discipleship’ and the much-vaunted move from maintenance to mission, from being inward-looking to outward-looking, with the secular mission of the laity that John Paul II spoke of in *Christifideles Laici*.¹⁰ The faithful are invited to discover their apostolate as missionary disciples, and the clergy their role as mission-directors.¹¹

Accompanying this change of mind-set, NE also implies a renewed pastoral practice that makes clearer its connection with the Person of Jesus Christ, with the *kerygma* and the call to discipleship. Thus, the influential Canadian priest James Mallon lays emphasis on the use of *Alpha*-groups into which new enquirers can be inserted. The focus on discipleship also suggests the need to discern more intensively the gifts, talents and charisms given by the Holy Spirit to believers for mission and service (cf. Eph 4: 11-12). This is the endeavour of Sherry Weddell and the Catherine of Siena Institute in its *Called and Gifted Program*, now operative in many dioceses across the English-speaking world.¹² Again, Pope Francis, in his Encyclical on the environment

⁹ Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* 27.

¹⁰ See John Paul II *Christifideles Laici* 15 (London, CTS: 1998). Cf. Congregation for the Clergy *Instruction on Certain Questions regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest* (Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana: 1997) p. 7

¹¹ The role of the laity in the Church’s mission is paramount. *Lumen Gentium* notes how it is the laity’s “special vocation . . . to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. . . . There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. . . . It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer” (LG 31). This task is not for the clergy. Only the laity, because of their skills in the world, culture and everyday life, can do this. As the Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* puts it: “the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which one lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others” (AA 13).

¹² See <https://siena.org/called-gifted> (July 2017)

and human ecology *Laudato Si*, invites Christians to campaign for and to put into practice sustainable life-styles, whilst serving the poor and needy.

Yet all these aspects of the new evangelisation, supremely commendable for their evangelical authenticity, need to be contextualised within the totality and flow of the Catholic Tradition. As discrete initiatives, they could unintentionally mislead the initiated into overlooking other important aspects of Christian life. More to the point here, they might suggest an activism disconnected from its liturgical foundation. They could lead to a horizontal or this-worldly focus neglectful of the vertical, supernatural and eschatological perspective. This is why the call to missionary discipleship needs arguably to be rooted in a sound theological anthropology, in which the human person is viewed as *homo liturgicus*, created for worship. As St. John Paul II said in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the Eucharist is “the source and the summit of all evangelisation.”¹³ In brief, humans are made for incorporation, through the Holy Spirit, into Christ’s sacrificial death, His self-offering to the Father in the Holy Eucharist. This is exactly what the Eucharistic miracle of Hasselt recalls for us.

2. The Human Person as *Homo Liturgicus*

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in its first paragraph, expresses God’s “plan of sheer goodness” to create man

“to make him share in his own blessed life. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all ... into the unity of his family, the Church.”¹⁴

Later, citing St. Augustine, it speaks of the desire for God written into every human heart; it is a desire for happiness that can only be satisfied by a relationship with God expressed through love and praise.¹⁵

Helpful here is the foundational account of human desire by the great 20C Jesuit philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan, and the centrality of his concept of conversion. In his writings, which span twenty-five volumes, and in particular in his two monumental works, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* and *Method in Theology*, Lonergan analyses the operations of the human person in his/her drive for self-transcendence.¹⁶ Every human person is structured to be a knower (oriented towards truth), a chooser and do-er (a moral agent oriented towards the good), and a lover (a spiritual being oriented towards happiness and union with God).¹⁷ His account

¹³ John Paul II *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (London, CTS: 2003) 22.

¹⁴ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (‘CCC’) (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: 2000) nn. 1-3.

¹⁵ “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for. ... This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.” CCC 27

¹⁶ Offered here is a global summary of Lonergan’s highly nuanced philosophy. For a brief overview, see B. Lonergan *Method in Theology* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1990) - henceforth referred to as *Method* - 104-105. Lonergan begins that section by stating: “Man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence” (104 top).

¹⁷ B. Lonergan *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan – henceforth CWBL – 3, ed. F. Crowe and R. Doran (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1992) and B. Lonergan *Method*. The critical edition of the latter has not yet appeared in CWBL.

of the operations of the human mind, will and heart is consonant with the classical philosophical tradition of Augustine and Aquinas, that the human soul is restless until it finds rest in God.¹⁸ This is the same intellectual trajectory Joseph Ratzinger belongs to in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.¹⁹ Lonergan's conclusions are also broadly congruent with such post-modern thinkers as James Smith, who speaks of *homo liturgicus*, the human person as a lover, a teleological being that needs habit, ritual and liturgy.²⁰

In brief, human desire, in Lonergan's account, unfolds through four self-assembling levels or clusters of operations, which he names experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding, although these titles incorporate distinctive sets of activities. Knowing is never a matter of 'taking a look' but a set of three dynamically related operations driven by insight: data to be collected (experiencing), ideas and theories to be investigated (understanding), and true judgments to be formulated (judging).²¹ Three levels of operation (experiencing, understanding and judging) constitute human knowing and these are most evident in sophisticated forms of knowing, in the data, hypothesis and verification of a court of law or a scientific investigation. Lonergan's contention however is that this structure is found in *all* forms of human knowing. Beyond knowing is choosing, the process of moral decision-making, a fourth level of consciousness. Volition builds upon cognition. Formulating the right decision always involves an accurate knowledge of the situation as well as the consideration of a value-system, with a judgment of value to be made according to a scale of values. With level four deciding, feelings too become intentionally significant. Thus in science, level four is about the application of results. In a law court, after a judgment on guilt and innocence, level four is about deciding a just sentence to apply.²²

¹⁸ The secondary literature on this is vast. For a brief summary from Lonergan himself, see Lonergan *Method* 3-25. St. Augustine famously said "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you". See Augustine *Confessions* Lib 1, 1-2, 2.5, 5 (CSEL 33, 1-5). This passage appears in the Liturgy of the Hours Office of Readings for the Ninth Sunday of the Year. The first part of the *Catechism* begins with this innate desire for God, saying that "the desire for God is written in the human heart, because [we are] created by God and for God, and God never ceases to draw [us] to Himself" (*Catechism* 27).

¹⁹ J. Cardinal Ratzinger *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco, Ignatius: 2000).

²⁰ See J. Smith *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Baker: 2009), especially 39-55.

²¹ See B. Lonergan 'Cognitive Structure' in *Collection*, CWBL 4 ed. F. Crowe and R. Doran (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1988) 205-221

²² Without wishing to complicate this, it is worth noting that some thinkers influenced by Lonergan detect in his thought further levels. Beyond the fourth level, for instance Tad Dunne speaks of a fifth level of consciousness, loving: see T. Dunne *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration* (Chicago, Loyola University Press: 1985). In other words, besides cognition and volition, beyond the fourth level, deciding, there is the cordial, the heart, the fifth level, loving, although other commentators, such as Michael Vertin and Pat Byrne, dispute this, preferring instead to see loving as part of level four: see M. Vertin 'Lonergan on Consciousness: is there a Fifth Level?' in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994) 1-36 and P. Byrne 'Consciousness: Levels, Sublations and the Subject as Subject' in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995) 131-150. Meanwhile, in later life, influenced by the work of one of his greatest students Robert Doran, Lonergan himself seemed to accept another level of operation, a kind of 'level zero', a psychic level prior to level one 'experiencing:'

"It is in the realm of symbols and stories, of what he terms the imaginal, that Professor Doran finds a deficiency in my work"

See B. Lonergan, 'Reality, Myth and Symbol,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, CWBL 17 ed. R. Croken and R. Doran (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 2004) 390. For a brief statement of Doran's position on the psychic level, see R. Doran, 'The Theologian's Psyche: Notes Towards a Reconstruction of Depth Psychology,' in F. Lawrence ed. *Lonergan Workshop Volume 1* (1978) 109-110. This is the realm of the subconscious, of dreams, feelings, dispositions, symbols and images. So summing up, some have argued that the four-fold structure Lonergan outlines is 'open at both ends.' Indeed, Lonergan added:

"Our intentionality analysis distinguished the four levels of experience, understanding, factual judgment and existential decision. We must now avert to the fact that this structure may prove open at

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Now at the centre of Lonergan's analysis is conversion. Conversion, and the grace of God that enables it, is not only key to theological method but arguably an organising principle useful to the work of NE. For the human knower, do-er and lover in his/her four-fold operation finds self-transcendence through three conversions: intellectually to the truth, morally to the good, spiritually to the love and happiness that ultimately God alone can give.²³ In Lonergan's account, the conversions (intellectual, moral, religious) can work from below up (believing, behaving, belonging) and from above down (belonging, behaving, believing). Indeed, they often work from above down, in that spiritual conversion, falling in love with God, prompts moral conversion, a change of life-style, which in turn prompts an intellectual conversion, a new mind and attitude.²⁴ The conversions can operate singly or multiply and in different combinations. They can be immediate and sudden, or gradual and long-haul. There can also be reverses and breakdowns.²⁵ Interestingly, Lonergan notes that in practice a genuine intellectual conversion is the most demanding conversion of all.

Conversion is a useful paradigm for pastoral planning. It suggests that in any work of NE, attention needs to be given to developing strategies that enable and support each conversion: the intellectual, the moral and the spiritual, in other words, doctrine, life and worship. For Lonergan, being in love is the fulfilment of human intentionality and that love, he avers, is essentially of three kinds: (1) the love of intimacy, of spouse and family, (2) the love for one's group, community and nation, and (3) Divine love, love for the Other, the love of God poured into the heart by the Holy Spirit, a love in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 5: 5; 8: 38f). Some suggest Lonergan's account of religious conversion comprises a triple conversion of love occasioned by the Holy Spirit: theistic, Christic and ecclesial. The convert comes to believe in God, and to give themselves to Him as their loving Father and Creator, a theistic conversion. The convert comes to believe in Christ, to enter into relationship with Him, to become His disciple, a Christic conversion. The convert also comes to believe and belong to the Church, becoming a member of Christ's Mystical Body, loving the community of which intrinsically s/he is now part, and with which s/he self-identifies, an ecclesial conversion.

Lonergan's account of 'self-transcendence' is philosophical and methodological. Ratzinger, in a properly theological treatise, explores self-transcendence in its theological aspect as self-sacrifice. In his *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he addresses the relationship of liturgy to the cosmos and to history. Sacrifice characterises worship:

both ends. The intellectual operator that promotes our levels of operations from the level of experience to the level of understanding may well be preceded by a symbolic operator that co-ordinates neural potentialities and needs with higher goals through its control over the emergence of images and affects".

See B. Lonergan 'Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon' in CWBL 17, 400

²³ For his own succinct account, see B. Lonergan 'Self-Transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious' in CWBL 17, 313-331.

²⁴ "Though religious conversion sublates moral, and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to infer that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious. On the contrary, from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God's gift of his love. Next, the eye of this love reveals values in their splendour, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion" B. Lonergan *Method* 243.

²⁵ See B. Lonergan *Method* passim but especially 110-112 and 237-244

“True surrender to God consists ... in the union of man and creation with God. Belonging to God ... means emerging from the state of separation, of apparent autonomy, of existing only for oneself and in oneself. It means losing oneself as the only possible way of finding oneself (cf. Mk 8: 35, Mt 10: 39). That is why St. Augustine could say that the true sacrifice is the *civitas Dei*, that is, love transformed mankind, the divinisation of creation and the surrender of all things to God: God all in all.”²⁶

Sacrifice is the essence of worship and Ratzinger links sacrifice to the cosmic and historical paradigm of *exitus* and *reditus*, the creation or coming forth of all things, including each person, from God, and the return or perfection of all things, including each person, to God. Because sin has ruptured this return, redemption, wrought by Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection, is now intrinsic to worship if humans are to be extricated and the *reditus* become possible:

“Sacrifice [must now take] the form of the Cross of Christ, of the love that in dying makes the gift of itself. ... All worship is now a participation in this ‘Pasch’ of Christ, in his ‘passing over’ from divine to human, from death to life, to the unity of God and man. Thus Christian worship is the practical application and fulfilment of the words of Jesus, proclaimed on the first day of Holy Week, Palm Sunday, in the Temple of Jerusalem: ‘When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all [people] to myself’ (Jn 12: 32).”²⁷

The goal of worship and the goal of creation, Ratzinger concludes, is thus one and the same: “divinisation, a world of freedom and love.”²⁸

3. The Eucharist as the Source of Mission

To turn now to the Eucharist as source of the NE, it would be good to keep before the mind two images which in fact are interrelated: the reliquary here in this Cathedral of Hasselt of the Sacred Blood-stained Host, and the van Eyck altar-piece in the Cathedral of Ghent, *The Adoration of the Lamb*.²⁹ This latter depicts the Eucharistic Sacrifice, Christ the Lamb of God, His Precious Blood pouring out, yet standing alive and risen, gazing at the viewer, inviting those who encounter Him to draw from Him new life. The scene takes place in a luxuriant garden with the towers of the heavenly Jerusalem in the distance, the Eucharist thus uniting earth with heaven, giving those who receive it a foretaste of eternity. Gathered around the altar are clusters of saints, the multitude of the elect reborn through the Blood of the Lamb (cf. Rev 7: 14), whilst high above is the dove of the Holy Spirit, Whose *epiclesis* in the Eucharist transforms not only the elements of bread and wine but the lives of believers. Interestingly, at the altar stands no celebrant. For Christ the Lamb is the High Priest and by baptism all Christians are a priestly people, offering themselves in union with Him.

²⁶ *The Spirit of the Liturgy* 28

²⁷ *The Spirit of the Liturgy* 24-34

²⁸ *The Spirit of the Liturgy* 28

²⁹ For a succinct yet illuminating theological reflection on the meaning of this masterwork, see R. Fazio Smith ‘The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb’: <http://www.theglobaldispatches.com/articles/adoration-of-the-mystic-lamb> (July 2017)

In its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council spoke of the Eucharist as the “the source and summit of the Christian life;” in it “is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself.”³⁰ It could be argued that in the period since the Council, much emphasis in theology, preaching and popular piety has been placed on the Eucharist as the *summit* of the Church’s life to the detriment of the Eucharist as its *source*. This in part is because the Church has lived through a period of intense reorganisation and liturgical reform; moreover, it is perhaps not easy to schematise the implications of the Eucharist as the source of grace for the multitudinous dimensions of Christian life. Thus, the official catechetical text prepared by the Holy See in preparation for the Year 2000 devoted just 14 of its 140 pages to ‘The Eucharist in the Life of Christians.’³¹ Nevertheless, the 2005 Synod of Bishops gave an extended consideration of the Eucharist. The Synod *Lineamenta* devoted its final chapter to the Eucharist as the source of humanity’s sanctification and divinisation, the bond of charity, a medicine for body and soul, a stimulus to social justice. This was followed in 2007 by Pope Benedict’s excellent Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, which dedicated its final third to the dismissal *Ite missa est* and to the Eucharist as a mystery to be lived.³²

This paper is about the Eucharist as the source of evangelisation. Commemorating the admirable Eucharistic Miracle of Hasselt and keeping before us the Ghent altarpiece, here are three brief pastoral proposals applicable to the current context.

First, there is a need to revivify the teaching on the Mass as a Sacrifice. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many ordinary Catholics today conceive the Mass to be a communion service with Scripture readings, preaching and prayers. They think of Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* but not the Ghent altarpiece. Yet *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* restates the teaching of the Council of Trent: that

“at the Last Supper, the Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, by which the Sacrifice of his Cross is perpetuated until he comes again.”³³

The *Instruction* then adds how in the Eucharistic Prayers, the priest

“enacts the *anamnesis*, while turned towards God likewise in the name of all the people, he renders thanks and offers the living and holy sacrifice, that is, the Church’s oblation and the sacrificial victim by whose death God himself willed to reconcile us to himself; the Priest also prays that the Body and Blood of Christ may be a sacrifice which is acceptable to the Father and which brings salvation to the whole world.”

³⁰ See *Lumen Gentium* 11 and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 5 in A. Flannery ed. *The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Jacksonville, Costello: 1996). See also CCC 1324.

³¹ See *The Eucharist, Gift of Divine Life. Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year 2000 prepared by the Theological-Historical Commission* (New York, Crossroad: 1999) 125-140.

³² See Benedict XVI *Sacramentum Caritatis* (London, CTS: 2007) nn. 70-93.

³³ The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (Third Edition)* n. 2: available online at <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/GIRM.pdf> (July 2017). The reference here is to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 47; cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 3, 28; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, nos. 2, 4, 5

Of course, on earth the heavenly Eucharistic Liturgy will never find its perfect form. Yet on earth, forms *are* important. The relaxation of the traditional Roman Liturgy, now called the Extraordinary Form, with its emphasis on the sacrificial nature of the Mass, is surely an advantage. Even in the Ordinary Form, aspects of the architecture, liturgical layout and the *ars celebrandi* merit attention. For instance, could there be a greater variation in orientation, with, say, where practicable, *ad orientem* celebration in Eastertide? Might a prominent central crucifix and Tabernacle focus hearts and minds away from the celebrating community towards the Sacrifice of Christ and the Liturgy of heaven? Would it be best to avoid locating the celebrant's chair at the centre of the apse in order to distract attention from the priest's personality? The faithful need to develop a richer Eucharistic spirituality by which they can learn to unite the prayers, words and deeds of their lives to Christ's self-offering to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The revised English translations, with the recovery of the language of sacrifice, is arguably a help, but a simple prompt might be to revive the older terminology, which regularly spoke of the 'Sacrifice of the Mass'?

Secondly, the practice of Eucharistic Adoration could be widely, actively promoted. If NE means a new, personal relationship with Christ, then resources are needed to help people learn the art of 'Eucharistic pray-ing,' to develop a personal friendship with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, to hear His daily call to discipleship. It seems sad that many contemporary Catholics, despite two millennia of spiritual theology, turn to yoga, oriental meditation and 'mindfulness' rather than the teaching of St. Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Francis de Sales. In a Holy Thursday *Letter to Priests*, Pope John Paul II explicitly sought to promote Eucharistic worship outside the Mass:

"The Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this Sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in adoration and in contemplation, that is full of faith, and ready to make reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world. May our adoration never cease."³⁴

Time spent in Eucharistic adoration, he added, can be transformative:

"It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. Jn 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. ... How often, dear brothers and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from Him strength, consolation and support!"³⁵

To enable Adoration, church buildings need to be kept open, not locked, and a reverent silence maintained, so that all can access the Blessed Sacrament. Pope Francis too has stated that "Christ should never be locked away":

"The church ... is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door."³⁶

In Eucharistic Adoration, Christians on earth come close to what the Roman Canon speaks of, a *locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis*, that blessed state of cool light and peace.

³⁴ John Paul II *Dominicae Cena* (London, CTS: 1980) 6.

³⁵ John Paul II *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 25.

³⁶ Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* 47

As in van Eyck's *The Adoration of the Lamb*, there is a two-way gaze. Indeed, could it not be said that as the disciple adores the Master, so the Master adores His disciple, a son or daughter created by the Father, animated by the Spirit, configured to the Son?

And thirdly, Lonergan's account of three-fold conversion, intellectual, moral and spiritual, can offer an organising principle not only for local, pastoral initiatives but more for individuals. In the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Holy Spirit joins Christians to Christ's self-offering to the Father, an offering that reaches its summit in the silence of the Consecration when Jesus is handed over from the Cross. But the Consecration is also the source of human sanctification, by which in Holy Communion, Christians receive back their lives transformed, renewed and dispatched on mission in self-sacrificing word, deed and love. The Sunday Eucharist, the Adoration of the Lamb, is thus a stimulus to ongoing intellectual, moral and spiritual conversion in the week ahead. It is the source of holiness. It gives participants energy to become converted and thus to become saints. In an essay on the Eucharist and mission in his *La Communion nella Chiesa*, Ratzinger speaks of *marturia*, martyrdom, in both its literal and general sense of 'witness.'³⁷ In the postmodern context, what counts is authenticity, image, personal experience. The pastoral task is to develop new methods to enkindle the religious sense, to enable people to encounter the Person of Christ, to be united with Him in their daily lives. Many celebrations of the Liturgy seem to focus on self, on community, on words, a theme or a message. Yet Catholic liturgy needs to be focused on the action of Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit. That is what the reliquary and Sacred Blood-stained Host here in Hasselt proclaims.

Conclusion

To conclude. In 1990, Pope St. John Paul II said:

"If we look at today's world, we are struck by many negative factors that can lead to pessimism. But this feeling is unjustified: we have faith in God our Father and Lord, in his goodness and mercy. As the third millennium of the redemption draws near, God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity, and we can already see its first signs."³⁸

That new springtime is surely now evident. Christians believe that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every child, woman and man, wooing them towards full communion with Christ in His Church.³⁹ Numbers may be smaller but numbers are not everything. Surely what counts are Eucharistically converted, evangelistic Christians. Already creativity is occasioning new developments. Already people are placing themselves in Christ's service. Already, young Catholics are responding to the Lord's command to proclaim the Gospel. Our prayer must be for an even greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that all might find in the Eucharistic Heart of Christ that true, genuine, lasting human happiness and fulfilment for which they long. Thank you for listening!

³⁷ J. Ratzinger 'Eucharistia e Missione' in his *La Communion nella Chiesa* (Milan, Edizioni San Paolo: 2004) 93-128.

³⁸ John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio* (London, CTS: 1990) n. 86

³⁹ Cf. John Paul II *Dominum et Vivificantem* 53 in ed. J. Dupuis *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church. Seventh Revised and Enlarged Edition.* (New York, Alba: 2001) 448 (n. 1048)