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Voice of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI in Defence of the Eucharist as a Propitiatory Sacrifice in the Context of the Catholic-Protestant Controversy

Głos Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI w obronie Eucharystii
jako ofiary przebłagalnej w kontekście kontrowersji
katolicko-protestanckiej

ABSTRACT: The article was inspired by the text *Significatio della Comunione* contained in Benedict XVI's posthumously published book *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, which caused a considerable stir in ecumenical circles and was usually interpreted as an expression of the senior pope's opinion about the impossibility of intercommunion with Protestants. The author tries to read the meaning of this text in a different way, considering it as Benedict XVI's last voice in the theological discourse, giving inspiration for further research. The article consists of two main parts. The first part presents the theological background of the issue of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice in three dimensions relevant here: the biblical and theological basis, the essence of the Catholic-Protestant controversy in this regard, and the rapprochement on the path of contemporary ecumenical dialogue. The second section is a chronological overview of Ratzinger's theological contribution to the resolution of this controversy from the 1960s to the end of his pontificate. Here we see that this theologian's work is not only in the line of the theological avant-garde breaking the stereotypes of the thinking of the time of the Reformation split, but also has an original contribution to the search for a path toward Eucharistic communion. The peculiarity of Ratzinger's theology here is, above all, a unique theological innovation drawing from fidelity to Tradition – there is no search for irenic shortcuts towards unity, but rather a diligent search for truth in the sources of Revelation, as summarized in the text mentioned at the beginning, published after his death.

KEYWORDS: Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, Eucharistic theology, mass as sacrifice, ecumenism, Catholic-Protestant dialogue

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł został zainspirowany tekstem *Significatio della Comunione*, zamieszczonym w wydanej pośmiertnie książce Benedykta XVI *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, który wywołał spore poruszenie w kręgach ekumenicznych i zazwyczaj był interpretowany jako wyraz opinii papieża-seniora o niemożności interkomunii z protestantami. Autor próbuje inaczej odczytać przesłanie tego tekstu, uznając go za ostatni głos Benedykta XVI w dyskursie teologicznym, dający inspirację do dalszych poszukiwań. Artykuł składa się z dwóch zasadniczych części. Część pierwsza prezentuje teologiczne tło zagadnienia mszy jako ofiary przebłagalnej w trzech istotnych tutaj wymiarach: podstaw biblijno-teologicznych, istoty kontrowersji katolicko-protestanckiej w tym zakresie oraz zbliżenia na drodze współczesnego dialogu ekumenicznego. Druga część jest chronologicznym przeglądem teologicznego wkładu Ratzingera w rozwiązanie tej kontrowersji począwszy od 60. lat XX wieku po kres jego pontyfikatu. Teolog ten w swojej twórczości nie tylko wpisuje się w linię teologiczną awangardy przełamującej stereotypy myślenia z czasów reformacyjnego rozłamu, ale także ma oryginalny wkład w poszukiwania drogi ku eucharystycznej komunii. Specyfiką teologii Ratzingera jest przede wszystkim swoiste nowatorstwo teologiczne czerpiące z wierności Tradycji, które nie jest szukaniem irenicznych skrótów ku jedności, a raczej żmudnym odkrywaniem prawdy w źródłach Objawienia, co reasumuje wspomniany na początku tekst wydany już po jego śmierci.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, teologia Eucharystii, msza jako ofiara, ekumenizm, dialog katolicko-protestancki

Inspiration – last writings of Benedict XVI in theological discourse

On 12 January 2023, less than two weeks after the death of Pope Emeritus, his book *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale (What Is Christianity? The Last Writings)*¹ was published with texts written in the period after his abdication from the Holy See. Some of Benedict XVI's reflections had already been known before (above all the text on the priesthood *Il sacerdozio*

¹ The word “quasi” (“as if,” “seemingly”), which does not appear neither in the Polish nor English translations that were published respectively in April and August 2023, is important here for the interpretation of these texts. Some commentaries on this publication omit it and treat the thoughts written here as almost the last will of Benedict XVI. It is probably more appropriate to perceive these texts as the last word in the theological discourses in which the Pope had previously participated. His spiritual testament, dated 29 August 2006, was published on the day of Benedict XVI's death. There we find one significant sentence in relation to theology: “For 60 years now, I have accompanied the path of theology, especially biblical studies, and have seen seemingly unshakeable theses collapse with the changing generations, which turned out to be mere hypotheses” (Benedict XVI, *My Spiritual Testament*, <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/elezione/documents/testamento-spirituale-bxvi.html> [access: 9.08.2023]).

*cattolico*²), but some are completely new texts and it is, above all, these texts that have aroused widespread interest. Among them there is the article on the possibility of Catholics celebrating the Eucharist together with Protestants *Significatio della Comunione*,³ which was immediately noticed in the ecumenical milieu.⁴ Numerous press reports and internet accounts read: Benedict XVI considers intercommunion impossible.⁵ This is a very superficial interpretation of the article. After all, in order to grasp the Eucharist in its fullness, all three aspects: Sacrifice, Presence and Communion must be taken together into consideration. Only then can one think of the communion of the altar. The reflections of Pope Emeritus are therefore in fact much more profound here; they reveal the source of the problem. The Pope is far from closing the issue; on the contrary, he entrusts the next generation of theologians with a task to approach the essence of the Catholic-Protestant controversy in a renewed way.⁶ This article, therefore, is to be a step in this direction. However, before addressing Benedict XVI's "last writings" that crown his theology, it is first necessary to show the historical and theological background of this complex problem, and above all to focus on the status of this issue in the entirety of Joseph Ratzinger/

² Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, Milano 2023, pp. 96–122 (English edition: Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity? The Last Writings*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2023, pp. 113–142; cf. Benedykt XVI, *Katolickie kapłaństwo*, transl. R. Skrzypczak, [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy*, Kraków 2023, pp. 139–178). The author notes that the text published here is a new version of an article contained in: Benedict XVI, R. Sarah, *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy and the Crisis of the Catholic Church*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2020, pp. 23–60 (Polish edition: R. Sarah, Benedykt XVI/J. Ratzinger, *Z głębi naszych serc*, transl. A. Kuryś, Warszawa 2020, pp. 21–57).

³ Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo...*, op. cit., pp. 123–139. Text dated 28 June 2018. We will refer here to the English edition: Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity? The Last Writings*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2023, pp. 144–161; cf. Benedykt XVI, *O znaczeniu komunii*, transl. R. Skrzypczak, [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy*, Kraków 2023, pp. 179–202.

⁴ See discussion in: *Benedikt XVI.: Mahlfeier mit Protestanten theologisch unmöglich*, "Ökumenische Information" 4 (2023), 24 Januar, p. 7.

⁵ E.g. see K. Bronk, *Benedykt XVI po raz ostatni o interkomunii w Niemczech* [Benedict XVI for the Last Time about the Intercommunion in Germany], <https://m.niedziela.pl/artykul/88250/Benedykt-XVI-po-raz-ostatni-o> [access: 3.02.2023].

⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 161: "If we consider these correlations, we can note with gratitude that in the past century a new and far-reaching point of departure has been given to us, from the ecumenical perspective, too, for a more in-depth theology of the Eucharist, which certainly still must be further contemplated, experienced, and suffered."

Benedict XVI's teaching, for only in this context can one properly interpret the essential thought of Pope Emeritus in this posthumous publication. As is the case with contributions, and as the title of this article indicates, the article only focuses on one fundamental issue, which is nevertheless the key axis of the Catholic-Protestant controversy in this area: the matter of understanding the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice.

Status quaestionis – the mass as a propitiatory sacrifice in the context of the Catholic-Protestant controversy

The Eucharist as a memorial (*anamnēsis*) of Christ's sacrifice on the cross – biblical and patristic foundations and the evolution of Eucharistic theology in the West during the Middle Ages

From the very beginning, the Church has fostered a profound belief in the expiatory power of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as evidenced by the New Testament texts placing this truth at the heart of the message of the Good News (see Rom 3:24–25a; 1 Cor 6:20; Gal 1:4; 3:13; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18–19; 1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; Rev 5:9).⁷ The fundamental hermeneutical key to reading the Eucharist as a sacrifice is to understand Jesus' intention in the words "do this in memory of me" (*eis tēn emēn anamnēsin*)⁸ and above all to interpret the word "memory" (Gr. *anamnēsis*) used here in a biblical way.⁹ When Jesus at the Last Supper institutes the rite of the Eucharist, through His words He clearly linked the actions and gestures over the bread and wine to the sacrifice He Himself would make on the Cross.¹⁰ This is particularly emphasised by the

⁷ For more on the results of contemporary exegesis of the New Testament texts on the propitiatory (atoning) nature of Jesus' sacrifice, see J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii* [Jesus of Nazareth. Studies on Christology], vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 6/1, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. M. Górecka, W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, pp. 437–439, 462–482, 540–547; cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, Freiburg im Br. 2016, pp. 63–66; G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta. Źródło chrześcijańskiego życia* [Mass as a Source of Christian Life], transl. S. Śledziewski, Lublin 2007, pp. 106–109.

⁸ Biblical texts in the English translation, unless otherwise noted, are quoted after the USCCB translation: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible>.

⁹ Cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia. Teologia i duchowość modlitwy eucharystycznej*, transl. L. Rutowska, Lublin 2015, pp. 99–100 (English edition: L. Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, Notre Dame, IN 2006); W. Beinert, U. Kühn, *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, Leipzig–Regensburg 2013, p. 672.

¹⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, op. cit., p. 123.

words spoken over the bread “This is my body, which will be given for you” and over the cup “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you” (Luke 22:19–20), to which Matthew added “which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28). The phrase “blood shed for you” clearly connotes the cultic deeply rooted in Old Testament sacrifices, where the motif of blood had a very elaborate symbolism indicating the reality of sacrifice, especially related to the establishment of the covenant (cf. Exod 24:8).¹¹ Thus, we see that the Last Supper was consciously experienced by Jesus as an anticipation of the salvific sacrifice of the Cross. But, even more significantly for us, Jesus, expressing His last will, commands His disciples to repeat this rite with the words: “do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19), “do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24). The fulfilment of this injunction, as the earliest New Testament accounts show, gives the Church gathered at the Eucharist the basis for believing that the Church participates in Christ’s sacrifice.

What is the principle and the basis of the faith of the early Church here? It is not inadvertently that Jesus used the word “memory/remembrance” when instituting the rite of His Passover at the Last Supper. This concept is deeply rooted in the biblical and especially Paschal tradition that forms the liturgical context of the Last Supper. The problem is that “memory/remembrance/memorial,” as well as their etymological cognates seem to connote only passive recollection of past events; they denote an act of our remembering and do not actually represent the meaning of the original New Testament use of the Greek word *anamnesis*.¹² Looking for Hebrew equivalents in the Old Testament for

¹¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Eucharystia. Bóg blisko nas* [The Eucharist. God Close to Us], transl. M. Rodkiewicz, Kraków 2005, pp. 33–41; J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, Göttingen 1967, pp. 213–214; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist. Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion*, Steubenville, OH 2018, pp. 111–117.

¹² D.E. Stern, *Remembering and Redemption*, [in:] *Rediscovering the Eucharist*, ed. R. Kereszty, New York–Mahwah, NJ 2003, p. 2: “This Greek word is practically untranslatable in English. ‘Memorial’, ‘commemoration’, ‘remembrance’ all suggest a recollection of the past, whereas *anamnesis* means making present an object or person from the past. Sometimes the term ‘reactualization’ has been used to indicate the force of *anamnesis*.” Similar opinion of M. Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* [First Epistle to the Corinthians. Introduction, Translation from the Original, Commentary], Series: Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 7, Czestochowa 2009, p. 368: “The Greek *anamnesis*, rendering the Hebrew term *zikkaron*, should be translated as ‘making present’. For a ‘memorial’ refers to the past, whereas ‘making present’ makes past events present now, and this is precisely the meaning of Christ’s words.” Cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 35–36; J.M. Czernski, *Liturgie Kościołów Wschodnich. Liturgia Kościoła bizantyjskiego, ormiańskiego i koptyjskiego* [Liturgies of the Eastern Churches. Liturgy of the Byzantine, Armenian and Coptic Churches], Series: Liturgia Musica Ars 1, Opole 2009, p. 93.

the Greek term *anamnesis*, one should point first of all to the Hebrew word *zikkaron*. We can find a proof in the Septuagint in which *zikkaron* is translated exactly as *anamnesis*.¹³

It is necessary to ponder briefly on the understanding of the concept of “memorial” (*zikkaron*) in relation to the Jewish Passover, since, as we have pointed out, it was in its context that Jesus instituted the Eucharist. Let us leave aside the unresolved dispute among biblical scholars as to whether the Last Supper was in a historical sense a Passover feast.¹⁴ From the New Testament accounts, one thing is certain: Jesus very deliberately chooses the Passover feast in order to incorporate the event of His death and resurrection into its liturgy and theology and thus establish His own feast, a new Passover.¹⁵ Thus, the Jewish Passover rite becomes the primary hermeneutical key for the Passover of Jesus.¹⁶

The fundamental text on the establishment and celebration of Passover by the Jews is the passage from Exodus (12:1–14),¹⁷ and in it the essential biblical testimony to Passover as a memorial is verse 14:

This day will be a day of remembrance (*le-zikkaron*)¹⁸ for you, which your future generations will celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord; you will celebrate it as a statute forever. (USCCB)

¹³ Cf. W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „Pamiętka” Pana. Eucharystyczna anamneza Misterium Paschalnego i jego egzystencjalna dynamika* [The Dynamic “Memorial” of the Lord. Eucharistic Anamnesis of the Paschal Mystery and Its Existential Dynamics], Kraków 1980, p. 23; D.E. Stern, *Remembering...*, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁴ See A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii* [Theology of the Eucharist], transl. S. Szczyrbowski, Warszawa 1977, p. 32 (German edition: A. Gerken, *Theologie der Eucharistie*, München 1973): “[...] even assuming that the Last Supper was not a Paschal feast, a Paschal theology starting from the Passover as a historical and salvific background is rooted in the Last Supper, and even more so in the theology of the synoptics and John”; cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 94–97; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib für euch gegeben. Geschichte und Theologie der Eucharistie*, Freiburg im Br. 2011, pp. 42–48.

¹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 460–462; cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 32–214; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, Series: Christianitas, transl. E. Pieciul, Poznań 2002, p. 89; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 89–90, 103–104.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Czerski, *Biblijny przekaz Ostatniej Wieczerzy* [Biblical Message of the Last Supper], [in:] *Misterium Eucharystii* [The Mystery of the Eucharist], ed. M. Worbs, Opole 2005, pp. 7–8.

¹⁷ Cf. the later account of Deut 16:1–8 and the less relevant accounts in Num 28:16–25 and Lev 23:5–8.

¹⁸ See A. Kuśmirek (ed.), *Hebrajsko-polski Stary Testament. Pięcioksiąg. Przekład interliniarny z kodami gramatycznymi, transliteracją oraz indeksem rdzeni* [Hebrew-Polish Old Testament. Pentateuch. Interlinear Translation with Grammatical Codes, Transliteration

This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. (English Standard Version)

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. (King James Version)

The Passover as a feast day is meant to be a memorial/remembrance (*zikkaron*) celebrated by all generations as a feast for Yahweh who liberated His people. We can see an important point in this statement – Passover as a feast, a liturgical celebration, is a memorial. The motif of sacrifice is also strongly inscribed in the Passover – this is particularly emphasised by another account of the feast from the Yahwist tradition (Exod 12:21–27): “It is the Passover sacrifice for the Lord” (v. 27). Thus, we can see that Passover as a memorial highlights two dimensions on the liturgical level: on the one hand, it is, through the rite of the Passover meal, an effective, real sign of the liberation accomplished by Yahweh (or, in other words, of salvation), and on the other hand, it is an offering made to God.¹⁹ The next chapter of Exodus (13:3–11) expands on the Jews’ understanding of the Passover; it refers to Unleavened Bread, which in time merged into a single festival with the Passover. Verse 8 remarkably emphasises the actualisation of the historical event: “This is because of what the Lord did for me [emphasise – JF] when I came out of Egypt.” These words, spoken by the father of the family at the Passover feast, were a confession of faith that what God had done at the time of the Exodus, He had also done for the speaker of these words and for the participants in the rite; moreover, they themselves are currently participants in the Exodus from Egypt.²⁰ Here an emphasis is placed on the almost sacramental realism of this rite, with the actualisation of the historical fact of liberation from Egyptian slavery. One can therefore conclude that Passover as a feast and as a rite, is precisely a memorial (*zikkaron*) in the

and Stem Index], Warszawa 2003, p. 252. The Jewish translation from Hebrew into Polish contains the word “pamiętka” (memorial); see *Pięcioksiąg Mojżesza. Druga Księga Mojżesza. Exodus, Tłumaczył i podług najlepszych źródeł objaśnił Dr. I. Cylkow* [The Pentateuch of Moses. The Second Book of Moses. Exodus, Translated and Explained According to the Best Sources by Dr. I. Cylkow], Kraków 1895, p. 51.

¹⁹ Cf. M. Thurian, *L’Eucharistie. Mémorial du Seigneur. Sacrifice d’action de grâce et d’intercession*, Neuchâtel 1963, pp. 37 and 43.

²⁰ See M. Rosik, *Eucharystia w tradycji biblijnej. Zapowiedzi – ustanowienie – ku teologii* [The Eucharist in Biblical Tradition. Prophecies – Establishment – Theology], Wrocław 2022, pp. 148–149.

sense that its essence is to make present anew the salvific event accomplished by God in the past. It is the word “memorial” (*zikkaron*) that added the deepest meaning to the Jewish Passover feast, for despite the one-off, unique historical nature of the Exodus event, it becomes an accessible present to those taking part in it, with which they identify.²¹

In such a context, we understand that Jesus, by instituting the rite of the new Passover in the Upper Room on the eve of His death and ordering it to be repeated in memory/remembrance/memorial of Himself to the disciples present there, who were Jews, was referring to their religious experience, and in particular to the celebration of the Passover, in which the category of “memorial-*zikkaron*”²² is central. However, the new rite then established by Jesus is not a simple continuation of the Jewish Passover, nor some modified form of its development. Jesus said His Haggadah, explaining His gestures over the bread and wine, not to repeat the old rite, but to make it an original, completely new one.²³ Just as for the Jews the Passover was not a mere verbal reminder of historical events, but a living actualisation of God’s salvific action during the night of the Exodus, so for Jesus’s disciples the Lord’s death became a cultic memorial. On the cross Jesus fulfilled John the Baptist’s prophecy of Himself “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) and became – especially in the Gospel of John the Apostle – the perfect paschal lamb whose blood has a salvific and expiatory power.²⁴ This connection of the Eucharistic memorial (*anamnesis*) with the sacrifice of the Cross in the early Christian liturgy is attested to by St Paul in 1 Cor 11:23–27, about which he writes in verse 26: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.” This sentence is the logical conclusion of the final words of the consecration formula recorded by Paul, where the emphasis falls on the word “memorial-*anamnesis*.”

²¹ Cf. M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii i modlitwie* [On the Eucharist and Prayer], transl. M. Tarnowska, Krakow 1987, pp. 20 and 24.

²² See more extensively M. Rosik, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 21–29; A. Demitrów, *Ciągłość i nowość między żydowskim Seder a ostatnią wieczerzą Jezusa* [Continuity and Novelty between the Jewish Seder and the Last Supper of Jesus], [in:] *Wspólnota eucharystyczna* [The Eucharistic Community], ed. A.A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2022, pp. 9–33; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 108–110.

²³ See more in J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 478–482; B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, Grand Rapids, MI 2015, pp. 403–443.

²⁴ See S. Lyonnet, *Eucharistie et vie chrétienne. Quelques aspects bibliques du mystère eucharistique*, Paris 1993, pp. 49–51; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco, CA 2005, p. 71 (Polish edition: J. Ratzinger, *Kościół. Pielgrzymująca wspólnota wiary*, transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 2005, pp. 89–90).

The expiatory nature of Christ's sacrifice is deepened from the theological perspective in the Letter to the Hebrews (7:1–10:18), whose author innovatively links the theme of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ's cross with the sacrifice for sins offered on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).²⁵ The message of this fragment can be summarised in the following two conclusions: The Old Covenant did not have, through the offering of blood sacrifices, the real possibility of forgiveness of sins – it could only confess them, offering “remembrance” (*anamnesis* – Heb 10:3) before God, hence these actions and the sacrifices associated with them had to be constantly repeated because they were imperfect (Heb 10:4–11), and it was only the perfect sacrifice of Christ the high priest on the cross accomplished “once for all” (Heb 10:10, 12; cf. 7:27; 9:28) that took away all sins.²⁶

Another problem arises here – if the Eucharist is to be considered a true atoning sacrifice for sins, how should we interpret the absolute statement that Jesus offered the sacrifice “once for all”? The Greek word *ephapax* “once for all” occurs three times in the Letter to the Hebrews (7:27; 9:12; 10:10) and always expresses the unique and ultimate nature of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but also the permanent sanctification of God's people through Christ's entry into the heavenly sanctuary (cf. 10:12–14), where He is constantly so that “he might now appear before God on our behalf” (9:24). Literally this “appear” is the equivalent to the Greek verb *emphanizo* meaning “to make visible” – the risen Christ stands before the Father on our behalf and makes His sacrifice constantly visible in the heavenly liturgy. It is worth noticing that in such a context the term “once for all” cannot be read statically in the sense of a relation to the past – in other words, it cannot be interpreted with an emphasis on “once.” If we accentuate the second part “for all/forever,” we discover that the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice does not mean that it is merely some isolated fact of the past, but is first and foremost a historical fact whose effects last continuously through Christ's eternal priesthood in heaven. The formula “once for all” emphasises the absolute, complete and permanent nature of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but it by no means imply that this unique event in history cannot be experienced and made present, for it also lasts “for all/forever.”²⁷ The sacrifice of Christ is

²⁵ See more in a very good synthesis of this topic in: Brother John, Taizé, *In Defense of Sacrifice*, Taizé 2022, pp. 27–39; cf. M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., p. 202; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 72–75.

²⁶ Cf. L.T. Johnson, *Sacramentality and Sacraments in Hebrews*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 118–120.

²⁷ M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150; the author here demonstrates the error of Protestants at the time of the Reformation, who read this “once and for all” purely

therefore a unique, exceptional and dynamic act, since it appears as the beginning and source of Redemption, which lasts forever. In this sense, we can say that Christ's unique sacrifice on the cross is at the same time an eternal sacrifice,²⁸ for "in the Risen and Exalted Christ his whole life is forever present [...], all that he said and suffered, up to his death on the cross" – "in the resurrection all earthly time is suspended" and history "becomes a concentrated present."²⁹

Thus, the Eucharist, as a biblically understood memorial (*zikkaron*), makes sacramentally present the one sacrifice for the remission of sins made by the Son on the Cross. Of course, the remission of sins is the fruit of this unique act of sacrifice on the Cross, but this sacrifice can be actualised because it is permanently present before the Father in heaven in the eternal liturgy of the Son-priest for eternity, who abides in a state of sacrifice³⁰. In the light of the Letter to the Hebrews, it is not possible, as we have already shown, to conceive of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and its associated remission of sins merely as an isolated act that took place in the past, but as a work of Christ that is continually ongoing and results in sanctification in all sacramental acts³¹ (Heb 9:14; 10:10, 14³²). In this perspective, we can call the Eucharist a true sacrifice – it is not an independent sacrifice with power or effect in itself, but derives its power from the one sacrifice of Christ, which it represents-presents-actualises in the liturgical celebration.³³

historically, without reference to Christ's eternal priesthood in heaven, and at the same time, innovatively as a Protestant theologian, he here paves the way for ecumenical rapprochement provided by this new reading of the formula.

²⁸ M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 144–146; cf. G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta...*, op. cit., p. 114.

²⁹ G. Lohfink, *Przeciw banalizacji Jezusa* [Against the Trivialisation of Jesus], transl. E. Pieciul-Karmińska, Poznań 2015, p. 268.

³⁰ H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboué, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia. Sakramenty, Kościół, Najświętsza Panna Maryja* [Signs of Salvation. Sacraments, the Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary], Series: Historia Dogmatów 3, transl. P. Rak, Kraków 2001, p. 275; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 367–368.

³¹ This idea is also confirmed in 1 John 2:1–2.

³² In particular, verse Heb 10:14 in the original speaks of those continually and perpetually sanctified (*dienekes*); see J.H. Thayer (transl., ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, New York 1886; R. Popowski, M. Wojciechowski (transl.), *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament* [Greek-Polish New Testament]. *Wydanie interlinearne z kluczem gramatycznym, z kodami Stronga i Popowskiego oraz pełną transliteracją greckiego tekstu*, Warszawa 2014, p. 1198.

³³ M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 148–150, 206–207; cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 232; P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia* [Eucharist], Series: Bóg, Człowiek, Świat 5, transl. K. Chorzewska, Kielce 2022, p. 73.

Jesus' words establishing the Eucharist form the original core of the Christian liturgy, but its broader framework originally constituted elements of Jewish liturgy, which was the natural soil for the spiritual life of the early Christians.³⁴ Of particular importance here, as Louis Bouyer has shown, are the Jewish blessing prayers *berakot*, in which the Jewish idea of memorial (*zikkaron*) is firmly embedded. They were very likely the inspiration for the most archaic Eucharistic prayers, and in this way the biblically understood idea of remembrance/memorial (*anamnesis*) became the fundamental basis of Christian liturgy.³⁵

In the era of the Church Fathers, the understanding of memorial in relation to the Eucharist as a sacrifice taken over from Jewish tradition was very vivid.³⁶ The most frequently cited evidence of this is the descriptive testimony of St John Chrysostom, whose synthesis is contained in the sentence: "It is not another sacrifice, as the High Priest, but we offer always the same, or rather we perform a remembrance (*anamnesin*) of a Sacrifice."³⁷ This is a very valuable, classic text on this issue, which explains, through the category of memorial–*anamnesis*, the singularity and uniqueness (Gr. *ephapax*) of the sacrifice of the New Covenant and its relation to the Eucharistic liturgy, so strongly emphasised in the Letter to the Hebrews. The one sacrifice of Christ is the sacrifice offered in every Eucharistic celebration in remembrance of its institution by Jesus; thus the Eucharistic sacrifice is the actualisation/making present of the sacrifice of the Cross.³⁸ For the Greek Fathers, *anamnesis*, preserving the link with the biblical understanding of a memorial/remembrance became the central idea, the key to explaining the mystery of the Eucharist and especially its sacrificial

³⁴ See more extensively J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Święto wiary. O teologii mszy świętej* [The Feast of Faith. On the Theology of the Mass], transl. J. Merecki, Kraków 2006, pp. 38–45.

³⁵ See more extensively L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 23–34, 94–100; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 471–472, 480; J. Ratzinger, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 52–53; M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii...*, op. cit., pp. 26–27.

³⁶ See more extensively P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 76–81.

³⁷ Full text: John Chrysostom, *Hom. Heb. 17,3* (PG 63, 131); English text: Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and The Epistle of the Hebrews*, Series: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series 14, ed. P. Schaff, New York 1889, pp. 363–522, <https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/VOL-14-Nicene-and-post-Nicene-fathers-of-the-Christian-church.pdf> [access: 30.10.2023]. For a similar text directly relating the Old Testament notion of a memorial in the Passover feast to the Eucharist, see John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matth. 82,1* (PG 58,739); English text: Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, Series: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series 14, ed. P. Schaff, New York 1888, pp. 491–497, <https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/VOL-10-Nicene-and-post-Nicene-fathers-of-the-Christian-church.pdf> [access: 30.10.2023].

³⁸ Cf. H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 106–108; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 163–168.

nature. They refined this concept on the basis of Platonic philosophy and its presuppositions, concerning the real symbol.³⁹ In contrast, the Latin Fathers, starting with Cyprian of Carthage, had a tendency to treat the Eucharistic sacrifice more as a form of repeating the sacrifice of the Cross.⁴⁰ From the end of the sixth century, the Latin Church began to lose the ability to construe the memorial, based on the words of the institution of the Eucharist, in terms developed by the Eastern Fathers and tended to interpret the Eucharistic liturgy as a new sacrifice, not by virtue of *anamnesis*, but by the direct offering of the Eucharistic gifts. It is here that we can point to the origins of the later crisis in the West concerning the question of the identity of the sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice, already signalled in some ways by the Eucharistic disputes of the early Middle Ages in the ninth and eleventh centuries.⁴¹

The pinnacle of medieval theology of the Eucharist in the West is the doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas, which set the course of Catholic theology in this area for centuries to come, being a kind of synthesis of the legacy of the Fathers made with the conceptual apparatus of Aristotle's philosophy. For Aquinas, the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the first place because "the Eucharist is the perfect sacrament of our Lord's Passion, as containing Christ crucified."⁴² Let us note that there is a shift in emphasis here on the question of sacrifice: the patristic model emphasised *anamnesis*, i.e. the basis was the actualisation/making present of Christ's Passover from which His presence resulted; in the scholastic model, the basis is the actual presence from which indirectly the sacrifice results. On closer examination of *Summa Theologiae*, however, it seems that Thomas did not completely lose the patristic model explaining the Eucharistic sacrifice, which can be exemplified with the patristic opinion – inspired by Augustine's text – recorded in *Summa* in the Christological treatise on the question of Christ's priesthood: "The Sacrifice which is offered every day in the Church is not distinct from that which Christ Himself offered, but is a commemoration (*commemoratio*) thereof."⁴³ On the other hand, if we turn to the Latin original of the passage devoted to the question of the Eucharistic

³⁹ Cf. W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „Pamiętka”...*, op. cit., p. 216.

⁴⁰ Cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 147–149.

⁴¹ See H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 115–117, 130–131, 185–187; cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 103–110, 145–146; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 173–174.

⁴² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [hereafter STh], III, q.73, a.5, ad 2; <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q73.A5> [access: 17.08.2023]. See also STh III, q.79, a.1: "per hoc sacramentum repraesentatur, quod est passio Christi" (<https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q79.A1.C.2> [access: 17.08.2023]). Cf. H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 223–224.

⁴³ STh III, q.22, a.3, ad 2, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q22.A3> [access: 17.08.2023].

sacrifice (STh III, q.83, a.1), we also find there the patristic term *imago repraesentativa*.⁴⁴ There are other statements which testify that Aquinas understood the Eucharist as a true sacrifice which makes present the one sacrifice of the Cross, wherever he uses the verb *repraesentare*.⁴⁵ We may insist on it, insofar as we understand *re-praesentare* in the original sense of the word as “to make present.” Ultimately, then, we can conclude that St Thomas, referring to the Church Fathers, preserved the essential intuition of the unity of the sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice through the concept of *repraesentatio* understood as making present.⁴⁶

In the late Middle Ages, with the change of philosophical paradigm and the dominance of nominalism, Aquinas’ model in the doctrine of the Eucharist was deconstructed. The theology of the late Middle Ages only pointed to the identity of the offered gift (*host*) in the sacrifice of the Cross and in the Eucharistic sacrifice, but not to the identity of the sacrifice (*sacrificium*). Thus, by separating the sacrament from the sacrifice, it lost the eventual (*anamnetic*) dimension of the Eucharist as a liturgical act,⁴⁷ which in practice resulted in an autonomous treatment of the Mass as a sacrifice against the one sacrifice of

⁴⁴ STh III, q.83, a.1, ad 2, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~STh.III.Q83.A1> [access: 17.08.2023]. See more extensively L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 343–348.

⁴⁵ STh III, q.73, a.4, ad 3, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~STh.III.Q73.A4> [access: 17.08.2023]. We refer here to the original text of *Summa* to avoid any imprecision as a result of the translation process.

⁴⁶ See more in J. Froniewski, *Eucharystia jako ofiara w nauczaniu św. Tomasza z Akwinu – próba poszukiwania adekwatnego klucza hermeneutycznego* [The Eucharist as a Sacrifice in the Teaching of St Thomas Aquinas – An Attempt to Search for an Adequate Hermeneutical Key], [in:] *Piękna dama Teologia. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi Romanowi E. Rogowskiemu* [Theology – a Beautiful Lady. A Tribute to Prof. Roman E. Rogowski], eds. W. Wołyniec, J. Froniewski, Wrocław 2016, pp. 233–244.

⁴⁷ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 135; W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „Pamiątka”...*, op. cit., pp. 240–241; J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. M.F. McCarthy, San Francisco, CA 1987, p. 255; cf. J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Formalne zasady chrześcijaństwa. Szkice do teologii fundamentalnej*, transl. W. Szymona, Poznań 2009, p. 345. It should be remembered that St Thomas’s Eucharistic doctrine was only sanctioned as official Church teaching at the Council of Trent, and that other concepts had previously operated in parallel with it. E.g. one generation later, Duns Scotus produced a doctrinal synthesis independent of that of Aquinas, in which the Eucharist was no longer a representation of the one sacrifice of Christ, but above all the sacrifice of the Church, which in practice meant that each Mass was a separate sacrifice, a repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross. It is also worth noting that even Cardinal Cajetan (Tommaso de Vio, †1534), a prominent Dominican theologian and Thomist, whose teaching would strongly influence Tridentine doctrine and who, as the Pope’s legate, held a dispute with Luther in 1518, despite his best intentions, in his

Christ on the Cross – this dramatic rupture would become the flashpoint of the most profound Eucharistic controversy in the history of theology formulated by the fathers of the Protestant Reformation.⁴⁸

The Catholic-Protestant controversy over the Mass as sacrifice during the Reformation period

For the father of the Reformation, Martin Luther, the Mass as a sacrifice was the main rock of offence in Catholic teaching on the Eucharist.⁴⁹ His criticism of the sacrificial character of the Mass was principally based on the biblical argument from the text of the Letter to the Hebrews (10:1–18) about the sacrifice “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Thus, the one sacrifice of Christ made on the cross is fully sufficient and requires no additions, and since one speaks of the sacrifice of the mass, one would be referring to some new sacrifice, or, as Luther claimed, a human deed that would have salvific power, which is contrary to the principle of *sola gratia* and thus unacceptable.⁵⁰ The atoning sacrifice is only one, and it was accomplished on the Cross. We can only consider the Mass as a sacrifice in the sense of thanksgiving for the

explication of the Eucharistic sacrifice may seem to suggest a repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross. Cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 351–353, 467, n. 43.

⁴⁸ See H. Hopping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 244–246; P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

⁴⁹ See more extensively J. Froniewski, *Marcina Lutra nauka o ofierze eucharystycznej. Jej ocena w orzeczeniach Soboru Trydenckiego oraz możliwości reinterpretacji w świetle współczesnych dokumentów dialogu katolicko-luterańskiego* [Martin Luther’s Teaching on the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Its Evaluation in the Teaching of the Council of Trent and the Possibilities of Reinterpretation in the Light of Contemporary Documents of the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue], “Perspectiva. Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne” 15/2 (2016), pp. 14–34; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 375–393; cf. M.L. Mattox, *Sacraments in the Lutheran Reformation*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 276–281.

⁵⁰ See more details in: M. Luther, *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae. Von der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche. Lateinisch/Deutsch*, ed., transl. H.-H. Tiemann, Stuttgart 2016, pp. 62–117; cf. J. Jolkkonen, *Luther and the Eucharist. A Defender of the Real Presence*, [in:] *Vermitteltes Heil. Martin Luther und die Sakramente*, eds. F. Körner, W. Thönissen, Paderborn–Leipzig 2018, p. 111; G. Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, Cambridge–New York 2008, pp. 100–105; H. Hopping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 246–250; W. Beinert, U. Kühn, *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, op. cit., pp. 664–665. See also J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, p. 290.

forgiveness of sins. This is because the precursors of Lutheranism made a very sharp distinction between *propitiatory sacrifice* (*sacrificium propitiatorium*) and the Eucharistic or thanksgiving sacrifice. The propitiatory (expiatory) sacrifice, as described in the Letter to the Hebrews, took place “once for all” and it is the death of Christ on the cross, which alone can atone for sins.⁵¹ In contrast, the eucharistic (thanksgiving) sacrifice does not merit the remission of sins, but is an expression of gratitude for this and other gifts of God and is therefore also called a sacrifice of praise.⁵² Luther categorically rejected the possibility of actively actualising Christ’s sacrifice, and in fact reduced the entire Lord’s Supper to the words of institution and distribution of the sacrament.⁵³ Also, in interpreting the words of institution “This do in memory/remembrance (Germ. *Gedächtnis* – ‘memorial’) of me,” he reduced the Church’s fulfilment of these words to the mere mention of Christ’s one sacrifice, that is, he completely separated the sacrifice from the memorial of the sacrifice. For him, the memorial was only the subjective recollection by faith of the benefits available through Christ’s sacrifice, i.e. the acceptance in faith of its effects, and not an objective event.⁵⁴ In Luther’s understanding, the Mass is not some form of making present (*anamnesis*) of Christ’s sacrifice, but a reenactment of the Last Supper as *testamentum* of Jesus.⁵⁵

Similarly, the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli by no means accepted the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist in any form; he insisted that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was a single and concluding event and there was no need or possibility of repeating it. In his reformed liturgy, he abolished the Mass as idolatry and introduced a very simplified communion service. The Lord’s

⁵¹ See *Augsburg Confession* XXIV (*Księgi wyznaniowe Kościoła luterńskiego* [Lutheran Church Confession Books], Bielsko-Biała 1999, p. 152). Cf. W. Beinert, U. Kühn, *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, op. cit., p. 667; S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie razem przy stole Pańskim. Wspólnota eucharystyczna według dokumentów dialogu katolicko-luterńskiego* [Catholics and Lutherans together at the Lord’s Table. Eucharistic Communion According to the Documents of the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue], Series: Jeden Pan, Jedna Wiara 22, Lublin 2015, p. 76.

⁵² This is explained in detail by Melancthon, *Defence of the Augsburg Confession*, <https://bookofconcord.org/defense/> [access: 17.08.2023]; cf. J. Sojka, *Widzialne Słowo. Sakramenty w luterńskiej „Księdze zgody”* [The Visible Word. Sacraments in the Lutheran “Book of Concord”], Warszawa 2016, pp. 257–259.

⁵³ Cf. J. Jolkkonen, *Luther and the Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 112–114; J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 261, especially n. 33.

⁵⁴ See more extensively A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 143–150.

⁵⁵ Cf. S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., p. 52, where the author states that with Luther “the anamnesis received the character of a ‘repetition’ (*Widerholungsmandat*) of what took place at the Last Supper.”

Supper, in Zwingli's teaching, is a memorial that was instituted, but it only has a significance as a commemoration in the mind of the believers to awaken in them gratitude for the salvific death of Jesus. He even saw an analogy between the Jewish Passover and the Eucharist, but believed that in both cases it is exclusively spiritual remembrance and the realisation of God's salvific work. For Zwingli, sacrifice and memorial are mutually exclusive: a memorial cannot be a sacrifice – the Last Supper can only be remembered, but not celebrated.⁵⁶ John Calvin, too, understood the Lord's Supper as a reenactment of the Last Supper without any sacrificial dimension; it is merely a feast of thanksgiving and praise.⁵⁷ Interestingly, although he was familiar with the patristic texts that refer to the Eucharist as a sacrifice, he interpreted the explanations about the anamnesis of Christ's sacrifice as a mere recollection of a past event.⁵⁸

The whole Catholic-Protestant dispute boiled down, to say the least, to the question of whether the Mass is a sacrifice or a memorial, where the memorial was understood by Protestants only as an act of human remembering. It was no longer understood that the Eucharist was a sacrifice because it was a memorial, but in the biblical sense.⁵⁹ The problem for the Reformers was that their criticism was valid, but it was essentially about the picture of the theology of the Eucharist they met in their era. In terms of patristics, especially Greek patristics, this problem would not arise at all, however, in the early sixteenth century, neither the Reformers nor, in general, Catholic theologians, starting from the assumptions of late medieval theology, could formulate a fully satisfactory answer to the question of the identity of the Eucharistic sacrifice with the unique sacrifice of the Cross.⁶⁰ The Catholics essentially defended their position on the basis of fidelity to Tradition.

It was not until the Council of Trent that a comprehensive response to the Reformation accusations was formulated. This Council, faced with a schism in the Church, had to thoroughly systematise Catholic doctrine, which in many cases led to the formulation of new dogmatic definitions denouncing previous erroneous views. The Council's key formulation explaining the doctrine on the

⁵⁶ See G. Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, op. cit., pp. 99–100; M.L. Mattox, *Sacraments...*, op. cit., pp. 277–278.

⁵⁷ Cf. M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii...*, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁸ See J. Calvin, *L'Institution Chrétienne. Livre quatrième*, Marne-la-Vallée–Aix-en-Provence 1995, IV,18,10, pp. 409–410, where he refers to the classical texts on anamnesis by Augustine and John Chrysostom.

⁵⁹ Cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 254.

⁶⁰ Cf. G. Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, op. cit., pp. 125–127; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 274–278.

sacrifice of the Mass is found in a single, very elaborate, and extremely condensed sentence in the first chapter of the *Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass* in the twenty-second session of the Council (1562).⁶¹ The conciliar document very accurately put the relationship between Christ's "once" (*semel*) sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice using the concepts of *repraesentatio*, *memoria* and *applicatio*. The Eucharist is the memorial (*memoria*) of Christ's Passover cultic event (the Paschal context is developed in the next sentence of this doctrine) that is made present (*repraesentare*) in the celebration of the liturgy of the Mass. The key term here, however, is not *memoria*, but the word *repraesentatio*—making present/actualisation taken from the teaching of Thomas Aquinas.⁶² The Council of Trent construes this word in such a sense that the Eucharistic liturgy represents the one sacrifice of the Cross without adding or renewing anything to it. On the other hand, the term "memorial" (*memoria*) is closely linked to the notion of making present—*repraesentatio*, and therefore very close to its biblical understanding.⁶³ However, the Council Fathers do not elaborate theologically on this concept, treating it with some reserve, perhaps in fear that the notion of "memorial" will be interpreted in the Protestant manner, merely as a purely psychological recollection/commemoration. Confirmation of this thesis seems to come from the wording of Canon 3 attached to the same doctrine, which condemns the view that: "missae sacrificium tantum esse [...] nudam commemorationem sacrificium in cruce peracti."⁶⁴

⁶¹ The Council of Trent, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, ed., transl. J. Waterworth, London 1848, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent.htm> [access: 17.08.2023] (Polish edition: The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones de sanctissimo missae sacrificio*, [in:] *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Tekst łaciński i polski* [Documents of the Universal Councils. Latin and Polish Text], vol. 4: *Lateran V, Trydent, Watykan I [1511–1870]*, eds. A. Baron, H. Pietras, Kraków 2007, pp. 636–639).

⁶² See H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 282–283; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 353–354; B.D. Marshall, *What is the Eucharist? A Dogmatic Outline*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 513–514.

⁶³ H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboüé, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia...*, op. cit., pp. 147–148; cf. P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 91–93.

⁶⁴ The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones...*, op. cit., p. 646; cf. H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboüé, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia...*, op. cit., p. 148; A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 154. For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see J. Froniewski, *Ewolucja rozumienia biblijnego pojęcia pamiątki w protestanckiej teologii Eucharystii* [Evolution of the Understanding of the Biblical Concept of Memorial in Protestant Theology of the Eucharist], "Świdnickie Studia Teologiczne" 13/2 (2016), pp. 45–62.

The subject of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice is taken up directly in the second chapter of this conciliar doctrine and the aforementioned Canon 3 in which the Protestant teaching is condemned: “If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or, that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice; [...] let him be anathema.”⁶⁵ It should be noted here that the doctrine of this chapter by explicating the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice to some extent blurs the clear teaching of the first chapter based on the concept of *repraesentatio*. The doctrine no longer refers explicitly to making present of the sacrifice of the Cross, but with considerable frequency uses the words “sacrifice” (*oblatio*) and “to offer” (*immolere, offerere*), and not so much in relation to the one sacrifice of Christ, but more to the Mass itself. By introducing these somewhat problematic terms, the emphasis was placed on the visible sacrifice of the Eucharistic liturgy.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, post-Tridentine theology followed precisely this direction, teaching most often about a reiteration or repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross in the Mass, which was elaborated in detail over the next four centuries by various immolationist and oblationist theories.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones...*, op. cit., p. 647.

⁶⁶ See The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones...*, op. cit., pp. 638–641; cf. H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboüé, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia...*, op. cit., pp. 148–149; A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 152–156; A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 158–159.

⁶⁷ For an extensive discussion, see K. Journet, *Msza święta: obecność ofiary krzyżowej* [The Mass: the Presence of the Sacrifice of the Cross], transl. M. Stokowska, Poznań–Warszawa–Lublin 1959, pp. 301–309; T. Pomplun, *Post-Tridentine Sacramental Theology*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 350–358; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 355–361; cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 159, 161; M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 14–17; G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta...*, op. cit., p. 196; P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., p. 93. It is worth noting here in particular the influence of the prominent theologian of the period immediately following the Council of Trent, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, SJ, who, through his monumental apologetic-dogmatic work *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos* (Venetiis 1599, <https://sbc.org.pl/dlibra/publication/12512/edition/38408?language=pl> [access: 30.10.2023]), set the course for so-called polemical theology (*Kontroverstheologie*) in the 17th century. A whole extensive section in this work (vol. II, part 3, books V–VI) is devoted to the Mass as a sacrifice; see R. Bellarmine, *On the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, transl. R. Grant, Post Falls, ID 2020, passim, especially the passage on pp. 163–168 containing an apologia for the Mass as an expiatory sacrifice in the face of Protestant arguments.

Ecumenical achievements in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue on the Eucharist

The lack of entirely satisfactory solutions on the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice in numerous post-Tridentine theories⁶⁸ became, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the impetus that pushed the theology of the Eucharist into a new track of a radical turn towards biblical, patristic and liturgical sources.⁶⁹ It was not until then that new generations of theologians restored to the doctrine of the Eucharist the original – biblical and patristic – understanding of the memorial (*anamnesis*) and, significantly, they came from different denominations, which will also be of extraordinary importance for the reception of this concept at the level of ecumenical dialogue. We should mention the Benedictine monk Odo Casel,⁷⁰ who has the greatest merit in rediscovering for Western theology the role of *anamnesis* in the Eucharistic liturgy, followed by the Lutheran biblical scholar Joachim Jeremias,⁷¹ who showed in a pioneering way the importance of the Jewish understanding of memorial–*zikkaron*. This theme was further developed in the context of ecumenical research, by Brother Max Thurian of Taizé.⁷² On the other hand, in the current of liturgical research, three figures are important here: an Anglican, Benedictine Gregory Dix;⁷³ a Jesuit, Joseph A. Jungmann;⁷⁴ and a convert from Protestantism, an oratorian, Louis Bouyer.⁷⁵

The Catholic-Lutheran dialogue, initiated at the Church-wide level shortly after the Second Vatican Council, followed this direction, seeking to reinterpret the 16th-century Eucharistic doctrines. Its second document published in 1978 was a joint statement on the Eucharist entitled *Das Herrenmahl* (The Lord's

⁶⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2004, pp. 250–252.

⁶⁹ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 166–167.

⁷⁰ O. Casel, *Das Gedächtnis des Herrn in der altchristlichen Liturgie*, Freiburg 1918.

⁷¹ J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, op. cit.

⁷² M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie. Mémorial du Seigneur. Sacrifice d'action de grâce et d'intercession*, Neuchâtel 1963; M. Thurian, *Une seule eucharistie*, Taizé 1973; M. Thurian, *Le mystère de l'eucharistie. Une approche oecuménique*, Paris 1981 (Polish edition: M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii i modlitwie*, transl. M. Tarnowska, Kraków 1987). It is noteworthy that Ratzinger calls this first fundamental book “comprehensively elaborated.” See J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 298.

⁷³ G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London 1945.

⁷⁴ J.A. Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, vols. 2, Wien 1948.

⁷⁵ L. Bouyer, *Eucharistie. Théologie et spiritualité de la prière eucharistique*, Tournai 1966.

Supper).⁷⁶ The importance of this document is still considerable today,⁷⁷ not only because of the historical breakthrough on the most poignant point of the Catholic-Protestant controversy, but also because of the comprehensive treatment of the topic, the methodology of the work and the reception of previous arrangements from earlier ecumenical dialogues.⁷⁸

The concept of memorial–*anamnesis* appears here first in paragraph 17, where it is stated that Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist as a memorial in the sense of *anamnesis*.⁷⁹ However, the most important statement, accepted by both sides, about the role of the biblical category of memorial in Eucharistic theology is found in point 36. It reads that the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharist can be properly grasped due to the concept of memorial or remembrance (*Gedächtnis, memorial, mémorial*) when understood in the sense of the Passover celebrated at the time of Christ, i.e. in the sense of effectively making present a past event.⁸⁰ The authors of the document go on to elaborate on how they understand this concept, which is of paramount importance because, as shown above, the writings of the Fathers of the Reformation understood the memorial only as a subjective act of remembrance (*nudam commemorationem*), which was condemned by the Council of Trent. This document makes it clear that it is not so much an act of human memory or imagination as a creative action of God who, for the assembly of God's people, actualises the salvific events of the past in a liturgical celebration.⁸¹

This brings us to the most difficult issue, that of understanding the Eucharistic sacrifice. The use of the category of “memorial” (*anamnesis*) made it possible to find that both the Lutherans and the Catholics share the opinion that Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper is present as the crucified one who died

⁷⁶ *The Eucharist. Final Report of the Joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission*, 1978, [in:] *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, eds. H. Meyer, L. Vischer, New York–Geneva 1984, pp. 190–214.

⁷⁷ Cf. S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., p. 105.

⁷⁸ See *The Eucharist. Final Report...*, op. cit., no. 3. These references mainly refer to the arrangements of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue in the USA, the documents of the Dombes Group, the *Accra Documents* from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission, Faith and Order and the arrangements of the Catholic-Anglican dialogue on the Eucharist.

⁷⁹ *The Eucharist. Final Report...*, op. cit., no. 17.

⁸⁰ *The Eucharist. Final Report...*, op. cit., no. 36.

⁸¹ See more extensively S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., pp. 167–169; the author notes that the document in a sense balances between the traditional view of the Eucharistic sacrifice and contemporary theological currents, especially those represented by Evangelical circles, which prefer to understand this notion of commemoration as the actualisation of salvation rather than the actualisation of the saving sacrifice.

for our sins and was raised for our justification as the sacrifice that was offered once for all for the sins of the world, with the reservation that this sacrifice cannot be prolonged, nor renewed, nor completed, but it can and must be made effective again and again in the midst of the community.⁸² At this point in the document, the two parties present different interpretations of the manner in which the Eucharistic sacrifice thus understood is effective. In view of the Catholic teaching on the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice (*sacrificium propitiatorium, Sühnopfer*), the Lutheran side constantly expresses reserve with regard to the term “Mass sacrifice” and prefers its own understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice as a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. The Catholics accept this approach as offering the possibility of a common understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice of the Church, but nevertheless not fully capturing the essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the light of the teaching of the Council of Trent. On the other hand, however, Lutherans see here a growing convergence towards contemporary explicit Catholic teaching, which considers the sacrifice of the Mass as the making present of the one sacrifice of the Cross, where nothing is added to its redemptive value.⁸³

The document *The Eucharist (Das Herrenmahl)* was an important breakthrough in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue on the Eucharist, since the consensus, which could not be reached for more than four centuries,⁸⁴ was eventually made possible by the reception of the biblical category of memorial (*anamnesis*). Consequently, both sides were able to agree on the claim that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice in the sense that it makes present, and not reiterates, the one perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross, made once and for all. Although it is also necessary to point out that, in certain Evangelical circles, the reception of this document has sometimes been marked by a certain fear of a “re-Catholicisation” of the Lutheran Lord’s Supper, and even in the harsher form of criticism of the exposition in contemporary Catholic teaching of the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist, which can be read as an impatient pressure to reduce this aspect on the Catholic side in the name of a falsely understood

⁸² Komisja Wspólna Rzymskokatolicka i Ewangelicko-luterańska, *Wieczera Pańska*, [in:] S.C. Napiórkowski, *Wszyscy pod jednym Chrystusem. Ogólnokościelny dialog katolicko-luterański*, Part 1: *Lata 1965–1981*, Lublin 1985, p. 56.

⁸³ Komisja Wspólna Rzymskokatolicka i Ewangelicko-luterańska, *Wieczera Pańska*, op. cit., pp. 57–61; cf. S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., pp. 170–174.

⁸⁴ Luther stated in *Smalcald Articles* (Part II, Article II, 10) that by the Catholic teaching on the Mass “we are for ever separated and enemies to one another” (*Księgi wyznaniowe...*, op. cit., p. 340; see <https://bookofconcord.org/smalcald-articles/> [access: 20.08.2023]).

ecumenism.⁸⁵ However, the most recent document of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue to date, *From Conflict to Communion*, which is a summary of 50 years of the dialogue, when discussing the issue of understanding the Eucharistic sacrifice, concludes rather optimistically: “If the understanding of the Lord’s Supper as a real remembrance is consistently taken seriously, the differences in understanding the eucharistic sacrifice are tolerable for Catholics and Lutherans.”⁸⁶

The Mass as sacrifice in Ratzinger’s theology

Only after the above panoramic sketch presenting *status quaestionis* can we undertake the task of tracing Ratzinger’s theological views on the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice. Without this introduction to this complex issue, it would be difficult to verify the position and contribution of the Bavarian theologian. The issue of the Eucharist occupies one of the central positions in Ratzinger’s theology – especially as bishop and pope,⁸⁷ hence it is necessarily impossible to refer to all his publications in one article, but we will indicate the most important aspects, stopping at three chronological stages of his theological activity.

Academic theologian

As a starting point for our research we will take a surprising thesis, which can be read in the extensive book *Dogmat i tiara* (Dogma and Tiara) (its message is suggested by the subtitle added on the cover, *Esej o upadku rzymskiego katolicyzmu* [Essay on the Decline of Roman Catholicism]) by the well-known Polish traditionalist columnist Paweł Lisicki, which is in fact – somewhat surprisingly for a representative of this milieu – a devastating criticism of Ratzinger both as a theologian and as a pope. Lisicki, who has more than once, in many of his books, courageously confronted the difficult themes of Christianity, states

⁸⁵ See O.H. Pesch, *Zrozumieć Lutera* [Understanding Luther], transl. A. Marniok, K. Kowalik, Poznań 2008, pp. 509–511; cf. A. Birmelé, *Théologie. Voix protestante*, [in:] *Eucharistia. Encyclopédie de l’Eucharistie*, ed. M. Brouard, Paris 2004, pp. 485–486. See also for a review of opinions against the exposition of the sacrificial dimension of the Mass in contemporary Catholic theology, L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 393–403.

⁸⁶ *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017. Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity*, Leipzig 2013, nos. 157–159, pp. 59–60.

⁸⁷ J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 2, Katowice 2016, p. 250.

that, Ratzinger in his *Introduction to Christianity* – his flagship work from the 1960s, which introduced him into the pantheon of 20th century theology – essentially deconstructs the traditionally understood expiatory dimension of the sacrifice of Christ's cross, and thus the Christian cult.⁸⁸ The basis for such a stance in Lisicki's view is, to put it as briefly as possible, Ratzinger's negation of St Anselm of Canterbury's purely legal theory of the atonement⁸⁹, which had a great influence on medieval soteriology, and thus indirectly Ratzinger's questioning the Tridentine teaching of the Mass as an atoning sacrifice. Is this really what the passage in the *Introduction* devoted to the article of the *Creed* mentions: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried,"⁹⁰ to which Lisicki refers in his assessment?

Certainly, Ratzinger finds Anselm's system insufficient though coherent in terms of legal logic, but despite Lisicki's suggestions, not to adapt to a modern mentality that no longer recognises sin, guilt and the need for redemption. Ratzinger wishes to fully clarify the Biblical message about the meaning of the Incarnation and Redemption flowing from the love of God, for as we read in this passage: "In the Bible, the cross does not appear as part of a mechanism of injured right; on the contrary, in the Bible the Cross is quite the reverse: it is the expression of the radical nature of the love that gives itself completely."⁹¹ Christianity is revolutionary here compared to other religious concepts, because atonement is not the result of human efforts to outdo the deity, but justification is the initiative of God, it is grace, "for in Christ God has united the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19). Thus, Ratzinger concludes, the optics of the understanding of sacrifice are radically changed – "Christian sacrifice does not consist in a giving of what God would not have without us but in our becoming totally receptive and letting ourselves be completely taken over by him."⁹² This thought of the German theologian is perhaps most aptly expressed in the language of the liturgy by the act of offering in the conclusion of the anamnesis of the ancient liturgy of St John Chrysostom: "To, co Twoje, z Twoich [darów], Tobie przynosimy ze wszystkim i za wszystko / Your own of Your own we offer to You, in all and for all."⁹³ Ratzinger's explication of the sacrifice of Christ's

⁸⁸ P. Lisicki, *Dogmat i tiara* [Dogma and Tiara], Warszawa 2020, pp. 337–343.

⁸⁹ See a summary of Anselm's teaching – J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., pp. 245–247.

⁹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 245.

⁹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 246.

⁹² J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 248.

⁹³ J.M. Czernski, *Liturgie Kościołów Wschodnich...*, op. cit., pp. 94, 251; *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-john-chrysostom> [access: 19.08.2023].

cross here is based entirely on the expiatory hermeneutic of the Letter to the Hebrews, inscribing Jesus' death on the cross into the theology of the Jewish atonement feast of Yom Kippur. In the light of this interpretation, the idea of substitution acquired a whole new meaning in Christ, and His death "was in reality the one and only liturgy of the world, a cosmic liturgy [...]. There is no other kind of worship and no other priest but he who accomplished it [reconciliation]: Jesus Christ."⁹⁴ It seems that it is above all on this point that Lisicki has diverged from the theological presuppositions of Ratzinger's reasoning, defending "need for redemption through him who alone loves sufficiently."⁹⁵ Here, however, one must first enter into his logic built on the New Testament understanding of sacrifice, where ultimately "the fundamental principle of the sacrifice is not destruction but love,"⁹⁶ for here "it is not pain as such that counts, but the breadth of the love."⁹⁷

Strictly in the context of the topic of our considerations, however, it is more important to note a lesser-known text published even a year before *The Introduction* in the journal "Concilium" (1967) entitled: *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*,⁹⁸ which theologically fully dispels the doubts sown by Lisicki regarding Ratzinger's understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice at the time. The article, although written in a period of post-conciliar ecumenical far-reaching hopes,⁹⁹ sets the issue rationally in the context of the 16th-century Catholic-Protestant controversy over the Eucharist, and the author posits it as a proposal for "a point at separated Christians, too, could try to find and to understand one another."¹⁰⁰

Ratzinger begins his contribution with an insightful presentation of Luther's stance, placing his dispute over the Mass in the context of the problem of justification central to his Reformation theology. In this logic, consequently, man cannot earn salvation for himself through sacrifices, he can only receive grace, hence "Luther saw in the idea of the Sacrifice of the Mass a denial of grace."¹⁰¹ The Bavarian theologian emphasises "the serious theological impor-

⁹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 251; see more extensively J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 84–87; J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 270–270.

⁹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 252.

⁹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 253.

⁹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 255; cf. J. Szymik, *Prawda i mądrość. Przewodnik po teologii Benedykta XVI* [Truth and Wisdom. A Guide to the Theology of Benedict XVI], Krakow 2019, pp. 136–137; J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 1, Katowice 2016, p. 257.

⁹⁸ Here we use the text contained in: J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 289–301.

⁹⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., p. 231.

¹⁰⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 301.

¹⁰¹ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 290; see more in L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., p. 377.

tance of these reflections,” especially since they are in line with the Letter to the Hebrews on the uniqueness of the priesthood and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ and “for this reason, a theology of the Sacrifice of the Mass should never bypass these questions carelessly.”¹⁰² Emphasising the positive elements in Luther’s argument, Ratzinger explicitly states that it “rule[s] out entirely the notion of the Mass as an independent, self-contained sacrifice” and, following the Reformer’s reasoning, he nevertheless asks: “whether the Mass, being the grant of the Christ-gift to his followers, must not also mean somehow the presence of this gift, the presence of Jesus Christ’s salvific deed”?¹⁰³ He recognises the aspect the Reformers failed to grasp, even though they perceived that “what once happened becomes present in the sacramental celebration with a view to me.”¹⁰⁴

The next stage of Ratzinger’s argument focuses on an in-depth analysis of the words of the institution of the Eucharist in the various New Testament accounts. The four accounts of the institution are commonly divided into two models: the first in Matthew and Mark, the second in Paul and Luke. The first one follows the Old Testament theology of sacrifice and therefore emphasises the “Blood of the Covenant,” the second the “New Covenant” in the blood of Christ. In the first model we can identify a wealth of references to the concept of covenant and sacrificial terminology inscribed in the Torah, which unambiguously links the event of the Last Supper to the Old Testament idea of cultic sacrifice. The second model refers to the prophecies of the new covenant by prophets who criticised the temple worship in favour of spiritual sacrifice – the gift of oneself to God. What unites the two accounts concerning the institution, seemingly opposite in their biblical connotations, is, as Ratzinger originally explains, the idea of substitution: of giving “for many,” “for you,” particularly present in Isaiah’s songs about the Servant of the Lord. Here lies the core of the New Testament understanding of sacrifice contained in the descriptions of the Last Supper, expressing the meaning of Jesus’ offering on the cross. As Ratzinger further notes, the full development of the theology of Jesus’ sacrifice is found in the Letter to the Hebrews, which, based on the idea of substitution, shows in Jesus’ death the real intention and completion of Old Testament worship. In this view, the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it makes present for us the one true sacrifice.¹⁰⁵ This making present is suggested by Jesus’ injunction “Do this in memory/remembrance of me.” Referring here to the fundamental works

¹⁰² J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 291.

¹⁰³ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 291.

¹⁰⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 292.

¹⁰⁵ See more extensively J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., p. 246.

of Jeremias and Thurian, Ratzinger points out that “memorial/remembrance” as a central category of Old Testament sacrificial practice is at the same time a “type of making-present.”¹⁰⁶ It is in its thought contexts that the event of the Last Supper finds its cultic explanation. He concludes his article by modestly stating that this sketch is not yet “an explicit dogmatic theory of the Eucharist as sacrifice,”¹⁰⁷ but we can see that, in the light of the achievements of exegesis at the time, he gives here a solidly biblically grounded lecture on the proper understanding of the sacrificial character of the Mass.

In the context of our topic, it is in turn important to note Ratzinger’s review of Wilhelm Averbeck’s book *Der Opfercharakter des Abendmahls in der neueren evangelischen Theologie*,¹⁰⁸ published in 1970. This short text testifies to the then would-be pope’s in-depth study of the complexity of the approach to the sacrificial character of the Eucharist on the Evangelical side, especially in 20th-century theology. As he assessed when discussing the evolution of this issue “[after setting out] energetically towards liturgical renewal [it] turns back to the Lutheran starting points and seems increasingly to relegate those who opt in favour of the sacrificial character to minor circles that are readily suspected of ‘Catholicizing’ the faith.”¹⁰⁹

In 1977, the journal “Communio” published another article by Ratzinger, relevant to our topic, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*.¹¹⁰ Although it is essentially an analysis of the historical process of the formation of the liturgical figure of the Eucharist from the Last Supper to the post-apostolic Church, it particularly addresses the theme of the Eucharist as sacrifice in its conclusions and additions. The point of reference for this text is the heated discussion during the post-conciliar liturgical reform, which clearly overemphasised the feasting dimension over the sacrificial one in the Eucharist. At the beginning, Ratzinger notes the tension between the dogmatic dimension, i.e. the Tridentine dogma of the Mass as sacrifice, and the liturgical one, which points to the form of feasting inherent in the Last Supper. He also notices

¹⁰⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 299; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 98.

¹⁰⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 301.

¹⁰⁸ W. Averbeck, *Der Opfercharakter des Abendmahls in der neueren evangelischen Theologie* [The Sacrificial Character of the Supper in More Recent Evangelical Theology], Paderborn 1967.

¹⁰⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 338.

¹¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 399–420.

that attributing only the form of a feast to the Eucharist is dangerously close to Luther's views condemned by Trent. In his analysis Ratzinger attempts to show that there is in fact no contradiction between the dogmatic aspect emphasising the sacrificial character of the Mass and its liturgical form as a feast. Drawing on Jungmann's research, he points out that the original liturgical form, however, was *eucharistia* – a prayer in the form of thanksgiving – rather than a feast, and that the term “Supper” itself was not used at all from the time of the First Letter to the Corinthians until the Reformation. Thus, the dogmatic and liturgical aspects are not separate, but, although different, interrelated. The Christian Eucharist was not a repetition of the Last Supper, although it was immersed in its multifaceted context of Old Testament worship, especially the Paschal references. On the other hand, the testimony of St Paul from the Corinthian community already shows that there was very soon a separation between the Eucharist and the meal – the agape feast. In the post-apostolic Church the Eucharistic liturgy was no longer a meal in the literal sense, but only as a “sign”. This is confirmed, for example, by the fact that during the Eucharistic prayers its participants stand. The essence here is not the meal, but the prayer of thanksgiving: “[once] the concept of the ‘meal’ is seen to be historically a crass oversimplification, once the Lord's testament is correctly seen in terms of *eucharistia*, many of the current theories just fade away.”¹¹¹ Thus, the separation of the liturgical and dogmatic dimension disappears here, but the distinction between the two is not blurred, since the Eucharist signifies both communion – the food in which the Lord gives himself and the sacrifice of Christ.

Ratzinger creatively continues his reflections on this issue in two previously unpublished postscripts to this article from “Communio”. In the first, he refers to the research of Lothar Lies, who believes that the meaning of the Eucharist is expressed in the Old Testament Paschal *eulogia*. This model confirms Ratzinger's earlier reflections and makes it possible to embrace presence and remembrance together, thus making it impossible to call the Eucharist merely a meal, or even a sacrificial meal.¹¹² In the second, he draws more extensively on an article by the Evangelical theologian Hartmut Gese, who, starting from the Paschal roots of the Eucharist, relates it to the broader model of the Jewish sacred feast, which includes a feast offering (*zabab*). This type of sacrifice always begins with *berakah* – the blessing of the bread and wine, in which we recognise the idea of *zikkaron* – memorial. As Gese notes, in Judaism from the time of Jesus, among

¹¹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, op. cit., p. 412.

¹¹² Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, op. cit., p. 412.

the feast offerings, a special role was played by the *tōda*¹¹³ – a thank offering (this Hebrew term was translated into Greek as *eucharistia*). The essence of *tōda* is the celebration of deliverance from misfortune – the celebration of the experience of salvation. Therefore, Ratzinger believes that just as in the Jewish *tōda* the rescued man offered an animal for himself, so Jesus in His *tōda* offered himself, and the food here is sacramentally the body of His sacrifice. Ratzinger concludes that these reflections shed a new light on the question of sacrifice: “Surely there are new possibilities here for the ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Protestants? For it gives us a genuinely New Testament concept of sacrifice that both preserves the complete Catholic inheritance (and imparts to it a new profundity) and, on the other hand, is receptive to Luther’s central intentions.”¹¹⁴

Bishop and Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

In 1978, four Lenten sermons preached by Ratzinger at St Michael’s Church in Munich were published under the common title *Eucharistie – Mitte der Kirche* (The Eucharist: Heart of the Church).¹¹⁵ These were intended by the author to be a synthetic catechesis on the Eucharist and are inevitably often a reference to his earlier texts on this sacrament. Therefore, out of the abundance of concepts to be found here, we select and will focus mainly on new threads that broaden the existing picture of his teaching on the Eucharist as a sacrifice. In the second sermon, where the theme of sacrifice is taken up, he strongly emphasises the connection between the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper and the event of the Cross. Without these interpretive words, Jesus’ death would be incomprehensible. On the other hand, Ratzinger points out that, in the light of John’s account, Jesus dies at the exact hour when the lambs were slaughtered in the temple for the Passover feast – He is the actual Paschal Lamb. Here the words spoken at the Last Supper find their fulfilment in His death. This shows us that the Eucharist is much more than a meal – it is the

¹¹³ For more on the significance of this sacrifice in Judaism and its relationship to the Eucharist, see M. Rosik, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 444–453; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 54, 123.

¹¹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, op. cit., p. 420.

¹¹⁵ We refer here to the text in: J. Ratzinger, *The Eucharist: Heart of the Church*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 340–399.

Sacrifice making present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But the initiative belongs to God – it is God who first bestows us in the Eucharist as the Roman Canon so aptly expresses it: *De tuis donis ac datis offerimus tibi*.¹¹⁶ Ratzinger, in order to clarify this, refers to the Paschal roots of the Eucharist and the concept of a memorial inscribed in the Jewish Paschal prayers.¹¹⁷ He further states plainly:

The Canon of the Roman Mass developed directly from these Jewish prayers of thanksgiving; it is the direct descendant and continuation of this prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper and is thereby the heart of the Eucharist. It is the genuine vehicle of the Sacrifice, since thereby Jesus Christ transformed his death into verbal form [...]. As a result, this death is able to be present for us.¹¹⁸

As a continuation of the Passover Haggadah, the Canon, as *eucharistia* (that is, the transformation of existence into thanksgiving), is the true heart of the Mass [...]. Thus the Canon, the “true sacrifice,” is the word of the Word; in it speaks the one who, as Word, is life. By putting these words into our mouths, letting us pronounce them with him, he permits us and enables us to make the offering with him: his words become our words, his worship our worship, his sacrifice our sacrifice.¹¹⁹

In the conclusion of this sermon, the then Archbishop of Munich also refers to the theme of intercommunion. He emphasises that the Eucharist can never be reduced to the role of a means or instrument that we are entitled to use, but that it is a sign of the unity that already exists, which is why all experiments instead of bringing unity closer are a falsification of the facts here. What is needed here is genuine humility and acceptance of what God wants to give us as His solution.¹²⁰

In this area of ecumenical discussions, it is also worth noting Ratzinger’s little-known speech at an international ecumenical conference at the International Bridgettine Centre of Farfa in March 1995: *Reception as the Result of Dialogue*¹²¹. In pointing out the most important results of the Catholic-Lutheran

¹¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 358.

¹¹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 358.

¹¹⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 359.

¹¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 360.

¹²⁰ See J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 308; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 242–243.

¹²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Reception as the Result of Dialogue*, [in:] *Catholic-Lutheran Relations Three Decades after Vatican II*, Series: Studia Oecumenica Farfensia, ed. P. Nørgaard-Højen, vol. 1, Città del Vaticano 1997, pp. 78–84.

dialogue, he places first, of the main themes, the convergence concerning the Eucharist. According to the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time, we are at a completely different point than in the 16th century, above all because of the new concept of sacramental actualisation, in which the sacrifice of Christ no longer belongs uniquely to the past, but in God transcends human time and in the sacrament it becomes present to us. In this respect, the question of the Eucharist in its sacrificial dimension is very close to the topic of justification¹²² and, although in its depths we have discovered a rapprochement by rereading the heritage of our traditions, not all differences have yet been resolved, although as regards the core of the problem, especially the sacramental life, progress is becoming increasingly evident.¹²³

Ratzinger's celebrated book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*¹²⁴ was published in 2000 and has stirred up much discussion. Although it essentially focuses on liturgical issues, it is inevitable that among a plethora of issues we also find several places relating directly to the theology of the Mass as sacrifice that we are discussing. Many of the themes previously reported above in Ratzinger's writings find their elaborate synthesis here – this is the case above all with the idea of the *logikē latreia* taken over from Paul (Rom 12:1), from which the author concludes that in Christian worship it is the word of prayer that is the sacrifice, but it reaches its fullness in *Logos incarnatus*, for when the Word has become flesh, the Eucharist is “the ever-open door of adoration and the true Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the New Covenant” – the true *logikē latreia* – “divine worship in accordance with *logos*.”¹²⁵ The extended theme of the understanding of *ephapax* from the Letter to the Hebrews also recurs. Referring to the thought of Bernard of Clairvaux, Ratzinger states: “The *ephapax* (‘once for all’) is bound up with the *aionios* (‘everlasting’). ‘Today’ embraces the whole time of the Church.” In this way, “in the Eucharist we are caught up and made contemporary with the Paschal Mystery of Christ.”¹²⁶ And although Christ's sacrifice has long been accepted, it is not yet over when conceived as a substitution: “the true *semel* (‘once’) bears within itself the *semper* (‘always’)”¹²⁷. This theme returns again

¹²² Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 544.

¹²³ J. Ratzinger, *Reception as the Result of Dialogue*, op. cit., pp. 82–83. It should be remembered here that 5 years later the *Joint Declaration on Justification* (1999) was elaborated, which became a milestone of the Catholic-Protestant dialogue.

¹²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 32–214.

¹²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 68; see more in *ibid.*, p. 64; cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 54–64.

¹²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 73.

¹²⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 72.

when discussing the significance of Pascha for understanding the role of time in Christian liturgy. As the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote in summarising this passus: “The whole meaning of the Jewish Passover is made present in the Christian Easter. At the same time, it is not about remembering a past and unrepeatable event, but, as we have seen, ‘once for all’ here becomes ‘forever.’”¹²⁸

The theme of the Eucharistic sacrifice itself, on the other hand, was developed in detail by Ratzinger in an interesting conference on the background of the discussion of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* at the liturgical symposium at the Fontgombault monastery in July 2001.¹²⁹ Starting from the statement of the conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: “For the liturgy, ‘through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,’ most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist,”¹³⁰ he undertakes here, referring to the reflections included in his book, a defence of the sacrifice of the Mass in the face of the widespread tendency in the post-conciliar era to marginalise the concept of sacrifice and even to adopt Luther’s views in some Catholic circles. The future Pope clearly rejects such views, claiming that the belief in the Eucharist formulated at the Council of Trent never lost its validity.¹³¹ He goes on to point out that Luther’s interpretative error consisted, in seed, in the principle that Scripture interprets itself and the rejection of Tradition,¹³² and that Scripture and Tradition cannot be separated: From the beginning, the Church understood the Eucharist as a sacrifice, as exemplified by the ancient testimony of *Didache*. Also, the concept of sacrifice itself must be construed in compliance with the hermeneutics of faith; Scripture must be read in its entirety and the texts of the institution of the Eucharist should only then be interpreted in such a way as we showed at the beginning of our article. Here the paschal key is particularly important for the hermeneutics of these accounts, as Ratzinger accentuates very strongly in various references.¹³³ The then Cardinal Prefect also describes other background elements of the problem of the contemporary denial of the category of sacrifice. The first is the deistic image of God,

¹²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 112; more extensively from p. 108.

¹²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Theology of the Liturgy*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 674–692.

¹³⁰ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, no. 2, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html [access: 20.08.2023].

¹³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 677.

¹³² Cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 315.

¹³³ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 679–682.

which results in a misunderstanding of the need for expiation in the human-God relationship,¹³⁴ the second is the individualistic image of man, to whom the idea of substitution is incongruent.¹³⁵ All this is compounded by the contemporary trivialisation of the liturgy, which blurs its essential message. He goes on, building on Augustine's thought, to devote much space to showing the essential difference between the understanding of sacrifice in natural religiosity, or even Old Testament religiosity, and the New Testament understanding of sacrifice – the essence of sacrifice is not destruction, it is the surrender of some precious thing to God. The sacrifice is only the sign of what is to become internally in man: the surrender of oneself completely to God in an act of love. This is what Christ does entirely, and it is what God reveals to us in the Eucharist,¹³⁶ which “to use Augustine's expression – is the *sacramentum* of the true sacrificium.”¹³⁷ Ratzinger also once again develops Paul's idea of the *logikē latreia*. In the final conclusions, we find two exceptionally accurate reflections in the context of our theme:

This true sacrifice that turns us all into sacrifice, in other words, unites us with God and causes us to become godlike, is indeed fixed and founded on an historical event but does not lie behind us a thing of the past but, rather, becomes contemporary with and accessible to us in the community of the believing, praying Church, in its sacrament: this is what “sacrifice of the Mass” means. Luther's error lay, I am convinced, in a false concept of historicity, in a misunderstanding of what is unrepeatable. Christ's sacrifice is not behind us as a thing of the past. It touches all times and is present to us. Eucharist is not merely the distribution of something from the past but is, rather, the presence of Christ's Paschal Mystery, which transcends and unites all times. When the Roman Canon cites Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech and describes them as concelebrants of the Eucharist, it does so in the conviction that in them too, those great men offering sacrifice, Christ was passing through time, or perhaps, more precisely, that in their search, they were going forth to meet Christ.¹³⁸

Trent was not mistaken; it stood on the firm foundation of the Church's tradition. It remains a reliable standard. But we can and must understand it in a new,

¹³⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 465, 542.

¹³⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Zastępstwo* [Substitution], [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii* [Jesus of Nazareth. Studies in Christology], vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 6/2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, pp. 833–844.

¹³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 682–685.

¹³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 688.

¹³⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 690–691; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 368–369.

more profound way, drawing on the fullness of the biblical testimony and of the faith of the Church of all times. There are signs of hope that this renewed and deeper understanding of Trent can be made accessible to Protestant Christians through the mediation of the Eastern Churches as well.¹³⁹

Pope Benedict XVI

The *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy of the years 2007–2012 is a kind of summary of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's theology, where all the themes from his earlier publications intersect and are complemented. We have already referred more than once in the footnotes to this work, especially to chapter *The Last Supper*,¹⁴⁰ illustrating in the first part of this article the achievements of contemporary theology of the Eucharist. Special attention still needs to be paid in the section *Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* to chapter 8, paragraph 3 entitled: *Jesus' Death as Reconciliation (Atonement) and Salvation*,¹⁴¹ where we have a synthesis of the doctrine of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice – all the threads of this theme from Ratzinger's earlier publications are gathered here. Christ, who announced that He had come “to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45) by his obedience “is the true worship, the true sacrifice.”¹⁴²

Ultimately, many elements of Ratzinger's theology of the Eucharist permeate the teaching of the Magisterium, especially when, as Pope in 2007, he writes the post-synodal exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*. First of all, he explicitly uses the biblical category of “memorial/remembrance” in many places here to explain the making present of the sacrifice of the Cross in the Eucharist: “The remembrance of his perfect gift consists not in the mere repetition of the Last Supper, but in the Eucharist itself, that is, in the radical newness of Christian worship.”¹⁴³ Among the many other threads signalled earlier, it is also worth

¹³⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, p. 691.

¹⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, transl. P.J. Whitmore; San Francisco, CA 2011, pp. 103–144.

¹⁴¹ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth...*, op. cit., pp. 228–240.

¹⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth...*, op. cit., p. 238; cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 46–49.

¹⁴³ Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007, no. 11, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html [access: 20.08.2023]; see the wider context *ibid.* nos. 9–10, 14.

noting the interpretation of Paul's teaching, originally developed in Ratzinger's theology, about the *logikē latreia*.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion – the task Benedict XVI left us with regard to unity at the Eucharistic table

We return to our starting point – to Benedict XVI's last text published shortly after his death. In the introductory part of his article *Significatio della Comunione*, Pope Emeritus pointed to certain external factors increasing the pressure, particularly in Germany, to bring about intercommunion as soon as possible. These are, on the one hand, political pressures to make this sign of ecclesial unity contribute to the political unity of a religiously divided nation and, on the other, strong Protestantising tendencies in the German Catholic Church. However, in the body of the text, he focused on the theological aspects of the issue, outlining three fundamental areas which, in his view, continually divide Catholics and Protestants and thus require further reworking so that real progress towards a common Eucharist is possible, without looking for shortcuts.

He first shows the difference in the very understanding of the form of the Eucharistic liturgy between the Evangelical Lord's Supper and the Catholic Eucharist.¹⁴⁵ This part of the book reflects, in fact, a synthetic summary of Ratzinger's earlier theological reflections on the formation of the forms of the Eucharist based on Paul's conception of the *logikē latreia* and the sacrificial theology of the Letter to the Hebrews. The differences are summarised by our author in this way:

In the Reformers' interpretations, the Eucharist is solely a meal, in the radical sense whereby only the sacred offering is distributed and given to be eaten, while for the Catholic faith in the Eucharist, the entire process of Jesus' gift in his death and Resurrection is present, a process without which these offerings could not exist. Body and Blood are not things that can be distributed; rather, they are the person of Jesus Christ who offers himself.¹⁴⁶

At the centre of his consideration here, Ratzinger poses the question: "What, in reality, is the offering of the Supper or, respectively, of the celebration of the

¹⁴⁴ Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 70.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, op. cit., pp. 138–140.

¹⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 152.

Mass?”¹⁴⁷ This is the area to which he devotes most space here by focusing on the concept of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist in both confessions. He first notes that for Luther the question of belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was so important that for it he was prepared to sacrifice unity with Zwingli, who rejected it (which occurred during the famous Marburg Colloquy in 1529),¹⁴⁸ and that now Lutherans, by signing the Concord of Leuenburg in 1973, have agreed to communion of the altar with the Reformed Churches, despite this important difference in belief, which marks a departure from the Lutheran tradition. This approach is transposed into dialogue with Catholics about the unity of the altar. Benedict XVI, however, sees the problem much deeper, namely in the very concept of Eucharistic transubstantiation. According to him, it is not possible to reconcile the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation with the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which captures in metaphysical terms the belief in the radical transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord rooted in the oldest Tradition of the Church – “for the Lutheran tradition, the ‘Body of Christ’ is eaten along with the bread, while in the Catholic view, Christ is taken and received in His sacrificial gift, and thus we allow ourselves to be drawn into this very gift.”¹⁴⁹ However, the way may be opened here by a new approach to the concept of substance, in the context of the achievements of the natural sciences and modern philosophy, where “being is relation,”¹⁵⁰ and thus to establish anew what the transformation of substance means. Leaving aside acceptable terminological explanations, however, it is unequivocal for Pope Emeritus that: “in the Eucharist one does not receive a little of the Body and a little of the Blood of Jesus, but rather one enters into the dynamic of the love of Jesus Christ that takes concrete form in the Cross and the Resurrection and becomes really present.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 152.

¹⁴⁸ For more on Luther’s teaching on the Eucharistic presence, see J. Froniewski, *Obecność Chrystusa w Eucharystii pod postaciami chleba i wina. Krystalizacja doktryny katolickiej na Soborze Trydenckim wobec nauki Lutra* [The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist under the Forms of Bread and Wine. The Crystallisation of Catholic Doctrine at the Council of Trent versus Luther’s Teaching], [in:] *Pozamszalny kult Chrystusa w Eucharystii* [The Cult of Christ in the Eucharist outside the Mass], ed. S. Araszczuk, Wrocław 2017, pp. 13–23.

¹⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 154.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 159.

¹⁵¹ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 157. Further in his conclusion Ratzinger writes: “Holy Mass makes present the sacrifice of the cross. Luther condemned this in the harshest way, on the basis of his rejection of the concept of sacrifice. And nevertheless, it is the sole reasonable interpretation of the Eucharist that was instituted on the evening before the Passion”; *ibid.*, p. 160.

Finally, the third important area in this issue is for Benedict XVI the question of the ministry, i.e. who is allowed to preside at the sacred liturgy. For him, the basis for this is the sacrament of priestly ordination¹⁵² (he develops this issue further in the text *The Catholic Priesthood* included in the same book¹⁵³) – to put it shortly, this is a split between a functional and a sacramental approach to the ecclesiastical ministry.¹⁵⁴

At the end of his article, Pope Emeritus affirms that his intention is not to conclude these difficult questions, but indicate new directions and perspectives: “To arrive in this field at an understanding that is in keeping with the Scriptures and to develop Eucharistic theology adequately is a fine challenge for the theology of tomorrow.”¹⁵⁵ “Authentic ecumenism can come about only by facing the major questions with which the Lord confronts us in his Paschal Mystery and by arduously and personally processing them.”¹⁵⁶

As Jerzy Szymik rightly stated that with such intelligence and courage, knowledge and position, Benedict XVI became today the main warrior in the battle for the truth of the Eucharist, for its proper understanding and practice.¹⁵⁷ For Ratzinger, it was always clear that the basis of ecumenical dialogue must be the truth that has its source in the Word of God¹⁵⁸ – as Szymik summarises his thought here that ecumenism in its essence cannot be a search for compromise between traditions, but a crucial question about the truth and a common pursuit for it.¹⁵⁹ The path Ratzinger/Benedict XVI indicates is a difficult one, but he is concerned with true *communio*, a unity without falsifying the difficulties or betraying the deposit of faith.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² See Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁵³ See Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity?...*, op. cit., pp. 113–142.

¹⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 158: “The service of the man who presides, who at the canon recites the words of transformation, is bound up with the sacrament of priestly ordination.” Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 263; J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 275–276.

¹⁵⁵ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 160; cf. Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁵⁶ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁵⁷ J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 252.

¹⁵⁸ See more in J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 235–237; cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 305.

¹⁵⁹ J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 309–310.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 322–323.

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