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## THE SACRAMENTS AT THE SERVICE OF COMMUNION IN UNITY WITH THE EUCHARIST

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**Abstract.** This article explores the theological and celebratory unity of the Eucharist with the sacraments at the service of communion: the sacrament of Holy Orders and the sacrament of Matrimony. The fact that these sacraments are administered in one liturgical celebration is not so much mandated by the rubrics as it is justified by their ontological unity. This is very clear in the case of the sacrament of Holy Orders, since it was instituted together with the Eucharist. The source that links the two sacraments is Jesus Christ as the High Priest and, at the same time, the Sacrifice made on the cross. There can be no Eucharist without the priesthood and no priesthood without the Eucharist. As regards the sacrament of Matrimony, it signifies the New Covenant and, in doing so, also leads to the Eucharist, which celebrates that covenant and makes it present in sacramental signs. Christ's love manifested in the Eucharist strengthens and sanctifies the love professed by the bride and groom in the sacrament of Matrimony. This means that the Mass should never be treated as a special addition to the celebration of that sacrament, because it is Eucharistic communion that creates and builds up marital communion.

**Keywords:** sacrament of Holy Orders, sacrament of Matrimony, unity, love, priesthood, marriage, New Covenant.

**Streszczenie.** *Sakramenty w służbie komunii w jedności z Eucharystią.* Artykuł ukazuje jedność teologiczną i celebracyjną Eucharystii z sakramentami w służbie Komunii, czyli z sakramentem święceń i sakramentem małżeństwa. Sprawowanie tych sakra-

mentów w jednej celebracji liturgicznej wynika nie tyle z przepisów rubrycystycznych, ile z ich ontologicznej jedności. Jest to bardzo czytelne w przypadku sakramentu święceń, gdyż został on ustanowiony wspólnie z Eucharystią. Źródłem łączącym oba sakramenty jest Jezus Chrystus – Najwyższy Kapłan i jednocześnie Ofiara złożona przez Niego na krzyżu. Nie może być Eucharystii bez kapłaństwa i kapłaństwa bez Eucharystii. Sakrament małżeństwa będący znakiem Nowego Przymierza również prowadzi do Eucharystii, która to przymierze celebrowa i uobecnia w sakramentalnych znakach. Miłość Chrystusa uobecniająca się w Eucharystii, umacnia i uświęca miłość nowożeńców, wyznawaną w sakramencie małżeństwa. Oznacza to, że nigdy nie powinno się traktować mszy świętej jako specjalnego dodatku do celebracji sakramentu małżeństwa. Komunia eucharystyczna bowiem tworzy i buduje komunie małżeńską.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sakrament święceń, sakrament małżeństwa, jedność, miłość, kapłaństwo, małżeństwo, Nowe Przymierze.

The document of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments that provides specific pastoral guidance and proposals for the Year of the Eucharist (2004–2005) points to the uniqueness of the sacrament of the Eucharist and encourages us to see other sacraments as being closely related to it:

The Eucharist is at the center of the sacramental economy, as the culmination of Christian initiation. The Eucharist enlightens the other sacraments and it is their meeting-point. The very structure of the ritual makes the possibility available, or stipulates—excepting the sacrament of Reconciliation—that the sacraments be inserted into the Eucharistic Celebration.<sup>1</sup>

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* divides the sacraments into three groups. One of these groups, the “sacraments at the service of communion,” comprises Matrimony and Holy Orders. While the primary purpose of these sacraments is the salvation of others, they also contribute to personal salvation through service to other people. Both of these sacraments confer upon a person a particular mission in the Church and serve

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<sup>1</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The Year of The Eucharist: Suggestions and Proposals*, Vatican website, October 15, 2004, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20041014\\_anno-eucaristia\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20041014_anno-eucaristia_en.html), sec. 7.

to build up the People of God.<sup>2</sup> In light of the above, their close connection with the Eucharist becomes evident.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the internal and external connection that exists between the Eucharist and the sacraments at the service of communion. In the author's view, it is important not to stop at the fact that these sacraments are administered in celebratory unity with the Eucharist, but to also attempt to find a theological justification for that unity. The sources that will be consulted to that end include, above all, liturgical prayers, rites, and theological and pastoral instructions found in all liturgical books. In methodological terms, the descriptive method and the liturgical hermeneutics method will be used in the article. Presentation of the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacraments at the service of communion will naturally lead to conclusions that may prove useful in catechesis and preaching.

## 1. THE EUCHARIST AND THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

The New Testament portrays Jesus as the one and only High Priest whose priesthood lasts forever (cf. Hebrews 5:1–7:28). Christ is the Priest who shed His own blood to reconcile men with God (cf. Mark 14:24; Romans 3:15; 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13). He is at the same time the whole burnt offering, the sacrificial lamb, and the propitiatory sacrifice offered for humanity (cf. Mark 10:45; Luke 22:19; John 1:29,36; 6:51; 10:11; 19:36; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 5:9–10; 1 Peter 1:18; 1 John 2:2). His sacrifice is the source of atonement for all sins (cf. Galatians 1:4; 2:20; Ephesians 5:20,25; 1 Timothy 2:6,14). In His own body, He fulfilled the entire sacrifice of the New Covenant (John 10; 1 Corinthians 5:7,13; 10:16–21; 11:13–17; Romans 3:23–24).<sup>3</sup>

As the body of Christ, the Church participates in Christ's priesthood in two ways: by virtue of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation in

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<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter CCC), 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1997), sec. 1534.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Antonio Maria Sicari, "Kapłaństwo Chrystusa," in *Kapłaństwo*, Kolekcja Communio, vol. 3 (Poznań–Warsaw: Pallottinum, 1988), 19.

the common priesthood and by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders in the hierarchical (or ministerial) priesthood. In both cases, the priesthood is closely linked to the Eucharist. All those who are baptized and thus participate in Christ's common priesthood are called to make spiritual sacrifices and offer themselves as a gift to God and to other people. This priesthood is fulfilled in a particular manner in the Eucharist as the most perfect sacrifice offered to God by Christ and by the community of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

The ministerial priesthood, which requires receiving the sacrament of Holy Orders, originated in the Upper Room. Together with the Eucharist, it has one common source: Jesus Christ. It was He as the High Priest who, by offering Himself to God in the sacrifice of the cross, became the mediator of the New Covenant (cf. Hebrews 8:6–13). Christ's priesthood was fulfilled in the most perfect manner in the sacrifice made on the cross. Earlier, at the Last Supper, this sacrifice was preserved in the sacramental signs of the Eucharist and priesthood. Through the connection between the person and the events, the ministerial priesthood and the Eucharist are bound together so intimately that, in effect, one cannot exist without the other. Just as the sacrament of Holy Orders has its origin in the institution of the Eucharist, so too it is fulfilled to the fullest extent in the Eucharistic celebration.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it is in the celebration of the Eucharist that the priest shows his identity most fully.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that “Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time.”<sup>6</sup> Christ gave His disciples the most important mission in the Upper Room when He instituted the Eucharist and said: “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24). To “do” the Lord's remembrance, ministers were appointed: first the apostles, and then their successors, the bishops. The divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry is exercised in different degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders known as episcopate, presbyterate, and di-

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bogusław Nadolski, *Liturgika*, vol. 3, *Sakramenty, sakramentalia, błogosławieństwa* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1992), 88.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Edmund Ozorowski, *Eucharystia w nauce i praktyce Kościoła katolickiego* (Poznań: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1990), 222–223.

<sup>6</sup> CCC, sec. 1536.

aconate. By receiving the sacrament of Holy Orders in the degree of a bishop or presbyter, a baptized person can participate in the ministerial priesthood of Christ, whereas the purpose of the diaconate is to assist bishops and presbyters and to serve the Church.<sup>7</sup> The subsequent sections of this article will attempt to demonstrate the intrinsic connection between the Eucharist and ministerial priesthood. The term “priest” will be used in reference to both the episcopate and the presbyterate.

For a better understanding of the relationship between the priesthood and the Eucharist, it is important to first have a proper grasp of the theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Correctly formulating the doctrine of Christ’s sacrifice will make it possible to understand the dual role of the priest as the presider of the Eucharist, as expressed in the formulas *in persona Christi* and *in persona Ecclesiae*. The doctrine of the Mass as the sacrifice of Christ was defined in detail and explained by the Council of Trent. During the 22nd session, the following conclusion was made:

And inasmuch as in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner the same Christ who once offered Himself [Hebrews 9:26] in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, the holy council teaches that this is truly propitiatory [Canon 3] and has this effect, that if we, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence, draw nigh to God, *we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid* [Hebrews 4:16]. For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note the double emphasis on the unity of the sacrifice and the sacrificer in the teaching of the Council. One could say that today, Christ offers Himself as sacrifice through the ministry of priests—

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. CCC, sec. 1554; Jacek Nowak, “Trójstopniowość sakramentu święceń,” in *Kapłaństwo*, Kolekcja Communio, vol. 3 (Poznań–Warsaw: Pallottinum, 1988), 94–111.

<sup>8</sup> Council of Trent, Twenty-Second Session, “Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass,” Chapter II. See Henry J. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (London: Herder Book Co., 1941), 145–146.

just as he once did on the cross, in His own Body and Blood. Thus, by participating in the Eucharist, we participate in one and the same sacrifice.<sup>9</sup> The salvific work of Christ is an imperishable reality that continues to be available to the Church in the form established by Him. Christ's sacrifice of the cross is repeated and made present by the apostles and their successors, the bishops, together with their collaborators, the presbyters. The Second Vatican Council unequivocally states that "every legitimate celebration of the Eucharist is regulated by the bishop,"<sup>10</sup> who does so by Christ's mandate. A presbyter may only preside at Mass by virtue of his unity with the bishop, and only together with the bishop may he share in Christ's priesthood.

In this context, it is also important to ask how one should understand the formulas that define the priest's actions during the Eucharist, that is, *in persona Christi* and *in persona Ecclesiae*. The priest celebrates the Eucharist *in persona Christi*, because the essence of what takes place in the Eucharistic assembly is the action of Christ Himself. The priest's outward action in the Eucharistic assembly fulfills a certain condition: it accomplishes what Christ commanded to be done in remembrance of Him. However, when the priest utters the words of consecration, it is Christ Himself who speaks through his mouth. Christ is the first cause of what is taking place, and the priest is merely the instrument.<sup>11</sup> The same is true of the relationship between the priest and the Church. The priest as a specific person remains in the background in relation to the Church because he does not act by virtue of a personal privilege but as a representative of the community of believers and within the framework given to that community by Christ Himself. The priest presides at the Eucharist *in persona Ecclesiae*, fulfilling a role that has been entrusted to him and is therefore

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jan Ambaum, "Funkcja kapłana w Ofierze eucharystycznej: in persona Christi i in persona Ecclesiae," in *Kapłaństwo*, Kolekcja Communio, vol. 3 (Poznań–Warsaw: Pallottinum, 1988), 260.

<sup>10</sup> Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*" (hereafter *LG*), Vatican website, November 21, 1964, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), sec. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. José Aldazábal, "L'Eucaristia," in *La celebrazione nella Chiesa. I sacramenti*, vol. 2, ed. Dionisio Borobio (Leumann (Turin): Elle Di Ci, 1994) 374–391.

not his own. The priest celebrates the Eucharist because he is a priest of Christ and of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

The Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy reiterated the fact that to constantly accomplish the work of salvation, "Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations," and above all, "He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially under the Eucharistic species."<sup>13</sup> The presence of Christ in the priest who celebrates the Eucharist takes on a special meaning in the words of consecration. The priest speaks Christ's words from the Last Supper: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you" and "Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me."<sup>14</sup> At this very point, we stand face-to-face with the most profound mystery of the action of the priest celebrating the Eucharist. This moment in the Eucharistic celebration emphasizes most prominently its unity with the sacrament of Holy Orders, since only a validly ordained priest can speak these words effectively. In other words, only a priest who has received the special gift of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Holy Orders makes bread become the Body and wine become the Blood of Christ by speaking the words of consecration. This is possible because he is acting *in persona Christi*. In his letter on the Eucharist, Pope John Paul II points to the deep meaning of the formula *in persona Christi*: "The priest offers the holy Sacrifice *in persona Christi*; this means more than offering 'in the name of' or 'in place of' Christ. *In persona* means in specific sacramental identification with 'the eternal High Priest'

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ignacio Oñatiba, "Ministeri ecclesiali: Ordine," in *La celebrazione nella Chiesa. I sacramenti*, vol. 2, ed. Dionisio Borobio (Leumann (Turin): Elle Di Ci, 1994), 710–728.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*" (hereafter SC), Vatican website, December 4, 1963, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html), sec. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *The Roman Missal: English Translation According to the Third Typical Edition* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 308.

who is the author and principal subject of this sacrifice of His.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it can be said that it is Christ Himself who puts His sacrifice—the same sacrifice that was accomplished on the cross—into the hands of the priest, thus making it the sacrifice of the Church that the priest represents.

The close and inextricable connection between the sacrament of Holy Orders and the Eucharist is emphasized many times in the renewed *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons*.<sup>16</sup> The theological and pastoral introduction reminds us that “Bishops are ‘stewards of the grace of the supreme Priesthood,’ especially in the Eucharist, which they offer or cause to be offered. Moreover, every lawful celebration of the Eucharist is regulated by the Bishop.”<sup>17</sup> The bishop bears the primary responsibility for the celebration of the Eucharist in his diocese.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, presbyters, who take part in the bishop’s priesthood and mission, exercise their sacred office in particular by celebrating the Eucharist.<sup>19</sup> The words of the homily that is part of the Rite of the Ordination of Presbyters are also meaningful in this context: “In being configured to Christ the eternal High Priest and joined to the priesthood of the Bishops, they will be consecrated as true priests of the New Testament, to preach the Gospel, to shepherd God’s people, and to celebrate the sacred Liturgy, especially the Lord’s sacrifice.”<sup>20</sup> In the promises made to the bishop, the elects resolve to celebrate the Eucharist reverently and faithfully, in accordance with the

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<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, “Letter *Dominicae Cena*e of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to All the Bishops of the Church on the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist,” Vatican website, February 24, 1980, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1980/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_19800224\\_dominicae-cenae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1980/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19800224_dominicae-cenae.html), sec. 8.

<sup>16</sup> See Stanisław Czerwik, “Tożsamość i posługiwanie kapłana według ‘Lex orandi’ typicznego wydania Obrzędów święceń z roku 1990 oraz jego polskiej edycji z roku 1999,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 49, no. 8 (2002): 17–43.

<sup>17</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons* (hereafter *ROBPD*) (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2003), sec. 14.

<sup>18</sup> See *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (hereafter *GIRM*), Vatican website, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20030317\\_ordinamento-messale\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html), sec. 92. “Every legitimate celebration of the Eucharist is directed by the Bishop, either in person or through priests who are his helpers.”

<sup>19</sup> *ROBPD*, secs. 101–102.

<sup>20</sup> *ROBPD*, sec. 123.



tradition of the Church.<sup>21</sup> During the liturgy of the ordination, the gifts of bread and wine are placed in the hands of the newly ordained presbyter, anointed with holy chrism, so that he can offer them to God in each Eucharist.<sup>22</sup> And as regards deacons, although they do not participate in Christ's ministerial priesthood, they too mainly carry out their ministry in the Eucharist. The homily reminds us that as ministers of the altar, they are to "proclaim the Gospel, prepare the [Eucharistic] sacrifice, and distribute the Lord's Body and Blood to the faithful."<sup>23</sup>

In summary, one can say that the sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist have the same origin. They were instituted by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. The priesthood was instituted for the Eucharist, and the Eucharist for the priesthood. The two sacraments are ontologically linked and cannot exist without each other. The priest shows his identity most fully when he celebrates the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is made possible by the presence of the priest.

## 2. THE EUCHARIST AND THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy recommends that, in accordance with the accepted custom, the sacrament of Matrimony should be celebrated during the Mass.<sup>24</sup> This recommendation does not merely follow from the rubrics or aim to invest the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony with a more solemn character. Rather, the combination of the two sacraments emphasizes, first and foremost, the fact that for marriage and the family, the Eucharist is the source of unity and love—the two values that constitute the foundation of marital and family life. In his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, Pope John Paul II makes it clear

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<sup>21</sup> The bishop asks the elects the following question: "Do you resolve to celebrate faithfully and reverently, in accord with the Church's tradition, the mysteries of Christ, especially the sacrifice of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation, for the glory of God and the sanctification of the Christian people?" (*ROBPD*, sec. 124).

<sup>22</sup> *ROBPD*, sec. 135.

<sup>23</sup> *ROBPD*, sec. 199.

<sup>24</sup> *SC*, sec. 78.

that “the Eucharist is the very source of Christian marriage”<sup>25</sup> and explains the intrinsic connection between Matrimony and the Eucharist using three categories: covenant, communion, and mission.<sup>26</sup>

The Eucharist is the sacrament that makes present the greatest salvific events that took place in history. Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection are the most prominent signs of God’s love for man. On the cross, a new covenant was made between God and man, founded on God’s love for every human being as revealed in Jesus Christ. Through Christ’s presence in the Mass, this love is made available to all people—at all time and in every era. Moreover, the Eucharist also makes present and continually renews the reality of the New Covenant.<sup>27</sup>

Christ’s covenant with the Church was made at the Last Supper and sealed with Christ’s blood shed on the wood of the cross. The Mass makes present the mystery of this New Covenant, whose central idea is that God gives Himself to humanity in His Son and that humanity responds by giving itself to God. Importantly, humanity does that in Jesus Christ, too. The New Covenant manifests itself in the salvific encounter and dialogue between God and man. This reality is also made present in every Eucharist, which is a mystery of presence and encounter. In the Eucharist, the greatest salvific events that demonstrate God’s love for man are actualized.<sup>28</sup>

In the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, marriage is often described as a covenant. The very concept of marriage is explained as follows: “The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the conjugal cove-

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<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio* (hereafter *FC*), apostolic exhortation, Vatican website, November 22, 1981, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html), sec. 57.

<sup>26</sup> *FC*, sec. 57.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Severino Dianich, “Carità,” in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia*, ed. Giuseppe Barbaglio and Severino Dianich (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1994) 123–125; Augustyn Jankowski, “Eucharystia naszą Paschą,” in *Mysterium Christi. Msza święta*, ed. Waław Świerzawski (Zawichost–Kraków–Sandomierz: Ośrodek Formacji liturgicznej w Zawichoście, 2012), 19–36.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Henryk Witczyk, “Przymierze,” in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 15, ed. Edward Gigilewicz (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II, 2012), cols. 769–770.

nant of irrevocable personal consent.”<sup>29</sup> Here, the word “covenant” replaces the earlier legal term “contract.” The most important characteristic of Christian marriage is that the man and the woman commit to each other in a love that is exclusive and permanent by entering into a personal covenant. This conjugal covenant is an image of God’s covenant with His people, and the mutual love of the spouses becomes a manifestation of His love. A special place in which this mutual love and unity can be made even deeper is the Eucharist. By participating in the Eucharistic community of the New Covenant, the spouses can strengthen their own conjugal covenant. In his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, the Holy Father John Paul II reminds us that “in this sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant, Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed.”<sup>30</sup>

In view of human frailty, volatility, and sinfulness, spouses need constant support in their marital covenant. This is the role of the Eucharist as the foundation and source of the permanence of their union. Due to the fact that the Eucharist continually actualizes the New Covenant, the spouses who participate in it are constantly transformed and renewed by that covenant. The sacramental marriage is a continual participation in the covenant between God and men. Importantly, this participation must not be conceived of as static. Marriage is not only a state that a man and a woman enter into, but also, and above all, an ongoing salvific event,<sup>31</sup> and every salvific event is a dynamic reality that demands active involvement and creativity. In other words, it needs inner strength to constantly bear fruit.

The inner bond that holds together God’s covenant with humanity is love. Likewise, in a marital covenant, it is love that unites the spouses, and the gift of God’s love is made evident to humanity to the fullest extent in the Eucharist. Hence, if the spouses intend to build and constantly deepen their mutual love, they have no choice but to draw from the spring of love

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<sup>29</sup> Second Vatican Council, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*,” Vatican website, December 7, 1965, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), sec. 48.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *FC*, sec. 57.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Jerzy Grześkowiak, *Eucharystia. Człowiek. Świat* (Włocławek: Włocławskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1997) 179–183.

that is the Eucharist. Marital love owes its existence to God's love, and at the present stage of salvation history, in which all Christian couples take part, the first and most important source of that love is the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, God reveals sacrificial love, because it is in this sacrament that the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, takes place. By dying on the cross, Christ gave himself for the salvation of the world. In the sacramental manifestation of that sacrifice, the Eucharist, Christ gives man His Body as food and His Blood as drink. In this way, the Eucharist teaches the spouses to love sacrificially, that is, to live for the other person. Daily marital and family life is full of all kinds of sacrifices, which—by the grace of the sacrament of Matrimony—are to be transformed into spiritual sacrifices and offered to God during the Eucharist. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* encourage the faithful to not only offer the Immaculate Victim to God during the Eucharistic prayer, but also to learn to offer themselves as sacrifice and—through Christ's mediation—become ever more united with God and with each other every day so that ultimately God may be all in all.<sup>32</sup>

In his exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, Pope John Paul II reminds spouses that through the sacrament of Matrimony, they are incorporated anew into Jesus: now, they exist in Him as two, as a community or communion of persons. This means that marriage becomes a new form of participation in Christ's paschal mystery, that is, in His death and resurrection.<sup>33</sup> Marital communion consists in being fully one and offering one to the other. This communion is further strengthened by the Eucharist, in which the spouses share the same food: the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. By receiving Holy Communion, they become one in Christ. In the words of John Paul II, "by partaking in the Eucharistic bread, the different members of the Christian family become one body."<sup>34</sup> No Christian community can be established without being grounded in the Eucharist as the source that nurtures human beings and leads them to true communion.

The third category that connects Matrimony with the Eucharist is the idea of "mission." In this context, it needs to be emphasized that both

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<sup>32</sup> SC, sec. 48; *GIRM*, sec. 79.f.

<sup>33</sup> FC, sec. 56.

<sup>34</sup> FC, sec. 57.

the Eucharist and Matrimony are kerygmatic in their symbolic dimension. Referring to the Eucharist, St. Paul wrote the following: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). Similarly, marriage as a mystery that is “profound” and “refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32) expresses and proclaims Christ’s love for the Church, which is shown most fully in His death and resurrection. Therefore, marriage is a paschal sign: a symbol of God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup> The conjugal community is meant to be an apostolic community that proclaims the good news of God’s love for man. When it speaks of the prophetic mission of the laity, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church emphasizes the importance of marriage and family in the work of evangelizing the world:

In connection with the prophetic function is that state of life which is sanctified by a special sacrament obviously of great importance, namely, married and family life. For where Christianity pervades the entire mode of family life, and gradually transforms it, one will find there both the practice and an excellent school of the lay apostolate. In such a home husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children.<sup>36</sup>

In this context, the first mission that the Eucharist gives to the spouses is to ensure that they live the Gospel in their family life. Pope John Paul II reminds us that “the Christian family fulfills its prophetic role by welcoming and announcing the word of God: it thus becomes more and more each day a believing and evangelizing community.”<sup>37</sup> The spouses’ mission of evangelization is therefore not limited to themselves and their family, and must also include other people whom God puts in their path.

The close and inextricable connection between the Eucharist and the sacrament of Matrimony is aptly summarized in the words spoken by John Paul II during a meeting with families in Szczecin:

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Grzeškowiak, *Eucharystia. Człowiek. Świat*, 195.

<sup>36</sup> *LG*, sec. 35.

<sup>37</sup> *FC*, sec. 51.

In the days of the Congress, we all focus on the words spoken by John the Evangelist, Christ's beloved disciple, in reference to the Last Supper: "having loved his own . . . he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). These words explain, at the same time, the mystery of Christ's Passover and the sacramental reality of the Eucharist: "he loved them to the end." The bride and groom, kneeling before the altar on their wedding day, say: "till death do us part." So says the groom to the bride and the bride to the groom. So they say together before the majesty of the living God. Before Christ. Do not these words resonate deeply with those of the Gospel: "He loved them to the end"? Certainly, my beloved brothers and sisters, there is a profound convergence and coherence here. The sacrament of Matrimony springs from an Eucharistic source. It springs from the Eucharist and leads to it. Human love "till death" must look deeply into the love with which Christ loved us to the end. In a sense, it must make Christ's love its own so as to live up to the message of the marriage vow: "I vow to you love, fidelity, and honesty in marriage, and that I will not leave you till death do us part."<sup>38</sup>

The Eucharist is at the center of all the sacraments; it is both their source and their pinnacle. All the sacraments trace their roots to the cross and to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since Christ's paschal mystery is the source of all the sacraments, and the Eucharist is the complete sacramental manifestation of that mystery, whenever Christian spouses participate in it, they immerse themselves anew, as it were, in their very origin, and, through the Eucharist, they are reborn, renewed, nourished, and supported.<sup>39</sup>

While the Mass needs to be seen as one act of worship, it is certainly possible to distinguish certain aspects which are particularly conducive to building unity and love in the marital covenant. These include the formation of the liturgical assembly, the Penitential Act, the Liturgy of the Word of God, the rites of the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Communion Rite. It appears that these aspects should be particularly emphasized in pastoral work

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<sup>38</sup> Jan Paweł II, "Praca nad pracą w odniesieniu do praw i wymagań życia rodzinnego," in *Trzecia pielgrzymka do Polski. Przemówienia. Homilie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1987), 101–102.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Gianni Colombo, "Matrimonio," in *Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*, ed. Domenico Sartore and Achille Maria Triacca (Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni Paoline, 1993), 762–765.

with families and couples. Through appropriate mystagogical catechesis, spouses should be prepared to participate more consciously and fully in the Mass. In fact, one should speak of family and marital participation in the Eucharist.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this article has been to demonstrate the close connection between the Eucharist and the sacraments at the service of communion, that is, the sacrament of Holy Orders and the sacrament of Matrimony. The sacrament of Holy Orders, which has three degrees, that is, episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate, is by its nature closely related to the Eucharist. In fact, it was instituted so that the Eucharist could be celebrated. Thus, what we are dealing with is not only a celebratory connection, but also, and above all, an ontological connection. These sacraments cannot exist without each other, and they were instituted simultaneously at the Last Supper. The sacrament of Holy Orders creates ministers and servants of the Eucharist, and the Eucharist, in turn, shapes their identity, spirituality, and service to God and people.

While it is possible to celebrate the sacrament of Matrimony outside the Eucharist, the theological and pastoral introductions strongly recommend that it should be celebrated as part of the Mass. The reason behind this recommendation is not merely rubricistic. Quite the contrary, the idea is to show the close connection between the Eucharist, which makes present the greatest salvific events in the life of Jesus Christ and thus demonstrates God's love for man, and Matrimony as the sacrament in which human beings vow to love each other. Through sacramental action, this love is incorporated into God's love for human beings. As the bride and groom vow their mutual love before God and before the Church, they participate even more fully in the New Covenant. Sacramental marriage is a sign of the New Covenant that has its beginning in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

From a pastoral point of view, it is rather easy to see the unity of the Eucharist with the sacrament of Holy Orders. The fact that this sacrament opens the way for the celebration and service of the Eucharist is self-evi-

dent, whereas in the case of the sacrament of Matrimony, it is very important to demonstrate its theological connection with the Eucharist, because today, one is often left with the impression that the Holy Mass is treated as an accessory that adds splendor to a Church wedding, or a reward for “better” Catholics. The faithful must be made aware that the newlyweds’ marital love is deeply immersed in Christ’s love, which is made present in the Eucharist. By manifesting God’s love for man and actualizing the New Covenant made by Christ and in Christ, the Mass is an everlasting source that renews and strengthens spousal love.

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