Between October 1 and 16, 2013, the Federal Government of the United States was effectively “shut down” due to Congress’s inability to resolve the budget for fiscal year 2014. In contemporary American politics, we have become accustomed to stalemates in public policy and political processes being driven by ever-increasing polarization. These polemical trends have become the dichotomous lens through which the media and our world perceive reality. The Church is not immune to such polarization, especially in how the media and general public often caricature Church leadership and doctrine.

Since his election on March 13, 2013, Pope Francis has been a media darling, being frequently portrayed in stark contrast to his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, especially in terms of the pastoral and social emphasis of his pontificate. The height of Pope Francis’s 2013 media rise was his being named Time Magazine’s Person of the Year. A lesser known public media accolade was that The Advocate also named the Pontiff as their Person of the Year, a surprising pick for a LGBT publication. Although both Time Magazine and The Advocate couched Francis’s often-interpreted liberal worldview in a more balanced light, such nuance is lost on most of the media. A quintessential culmination of the division depicted between Francis and Benedict in public discourse is the February 13, 2014 Rolling Stone cover story: “Pope Francis, the Times They Are A-Changin’.” A central theme of this division is the caricaturization of Benedict’s doctrinal and liturgical emphasis and Francis’s interest in poverty and inequality. The article claims:

Francis threw down a real marker in November, with the release of his first apostolic exhortation, or official written teaching. Apostolic exhortations under John Paul II and Benedict tended toward the dogmatic (JPII’s Familiaris Consortio restated orthodox Church teaching on birth control and the traditional family) or the wonky (Benedict’s Sacramentum Caritatis spent 32,000 words on the Eucharist). In this context, the blistering attacks on income inequality in Francis’ Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”) resonate like a bomb.¹

Many conversations, formal and informal, in theological circles seem to focus on how “progressive” Francis is or is not. However, little energy seems to center on determining the legitimacy of portraying his predecessor as out of touch and disinterested in the concerns of our time. Has Francis departed that significantly from Benedict? Is a pontificate that would dedicate so much verbiage toward the Eucharist somehow inherently disinterested in

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the plight of the poor, or is there more depth to what Benedict was attempting to accomplish? Did he provide a
more significant foundation for the social emphasis of Francis than may be thought by the general public?

Given the popular conception of Pope Benedict XVI as a radical conservative, there was little surprise when he
issued the Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum, allowing what he called the extraordinary form of the Mass
(usus antiquior), the 1962 Missal of Blessed John XXIII—functionally known as the Traditional Latin Mass of the
council of Trent—to be celebrated more freely in the Church. He is also known for attempted reconciliation with
the schismatic conservative group The Society of St. Pius X. Under him, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the
Faith took steps toward correcting what the Roman Curia deemed a “doctrinal crisis” among women religious
in the United States. More surprising to many has been the pastoral nature of his encyclical letters Deus Caritas
Est and Spe Salve, along with the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, Sacramentum Caritatis. Yet more striking
still was the release of Benedict’s last official encyclical as a reining pontiff, Caritas in Veritate. Lisa Sowle Cahill
describes the encyclical letter as “a concrete response to global poverty and violence, especially the inequities
and imbalances of power that lie behind the global economic crisis of 2008 to 2010.”

For many, this document was so unexpected that some of Benedict’s greatest supporters, like George Weigel,
responded with criticism and even redactions in search of what was an “authentic” voice of the Pope amidst
what were seen by critics as external intellectual influences. Benedict advocated both for what some would clas-
sify as anachronistic liturgy and ritual, and major structural change in social, economic, and political spheres. For
many this is inherently contradictory. I believe that these two “poles” grow from the same intellectual tradition
exhibiting a remarkable continuity (though not without evolution of thought) within the theology of then Joseph
Cardinal Ratzinger and now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. If this continuity of thought is true, then the emphasis
of Francis on the poor is not a departure from the theology of Benedict but an ever increasing praxis of what
was set forth by his predecessor. It may be in fact a concrete manifestation of the liturgical axiom, lex orandi, lex
credendi, lex vivendi.

It is possible to explore the liturgical, and more specifically Eucharistic, theology of Benedict in light of social
and ethical implications precisely because his methodological worldview is noted for its holistic approach. Pablo
Blanco, speaking of the relationship between scripture and theology in Ratzinger’s (now Pope Emeritus Benedict
XVI) corpus, notes that “the nexus between exegesis and theology, Old and New Testament, Bible and church,
word and dogma, revelation, Scripture and tradition is re-established...Ratzinger’s habitual integrating perspec-
tive makes itself present in these themes.” The coherent integrity of Ratzinger’s writings over the span of his
career is also supported by many notable theologians including Kräning, F. Schüssler Fiorenza, J. Komonchak, T.
Rowlands, and L. Boeve, according to Blanco. Within his own understanding, Ratzinger promotes the “import-
tance of reason and the unity of all theology.”

Building further on points of correlation in Ratzinger’s thoughts, and providing a place of departure for this pa-
per, Tom Dalzell asserts that “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis are closely linked themes in the theology
of Joseph Ratzinger.” James Massa claims that:

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3 Through the course of this paper I will refer to the theologian in question by the appropriate name relative to his role at the time of thoughts or
writings being explicated. The name Benedict will only be used for those writings and developments during his reign as pope. For quotations from
other authors, the name used by the author cited has been left intact.
7 Thomas Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: The Priority of the Vertical” (paper presented at
World Catholicism Week at DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, April 2012), 1.
Ratzinger’s Eucharistic theology opens out to a social ethic in which the Christ of the Passion, who washed the feet of his disciples (John 13:1-10), becomes the model for compassionate service on behalf of justice and peace. No opposition between worship and ethics can be tolerated. Eucharistic communion entails both the experience of being loved and the compulsion to love generously in turn.8

In this light, the Eucharistic theology of Pope Benedict and his social thought may be understood to be the ontological prerequisite for the current thrust of Francis’s magisterium. A critical understanding of Benedict’s thought, then, is of critical importance.

The Eucharistic Theology of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Eucharist and liturgy are major themes and areas of focus in the theology of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and in his writings as Pope Benedict XVI. Here, central themes of his theology will be explored: the foundational source of the Eucharistic and its cosmic significance, the central role of sacrifice in Eucharistic understanding, the significance of communio as a Eucharistic ecclesiology, and how this connects to Eucharistic personalism. None of these topics are discrete entities unto themselves; they flow one to the other, interconnecting with the wider range of Ratzinger’s theology. This is because, as Blanco notes, “The liturgy...constitutes a starting point for [Ratzinger’s] thought. He thinks that the very understanding of the Church must come from the liturgy.”9 So, then, the same would be true for social ethics.

Transcendence and Incarnation as Epistemology

In his epistemological approach, Ratzinger emphasizes the need for the foundation of knowledge to be revelation from a source transcendent of the human person, the centrality of the historicity of the paschal mystery, and, therefore, the efficacious cosmic significance of the Eucharist.

Dalzell rightly argues that this priority of the vertical over the horizontal is not necessarily due to the neo-platonic or neo-Augustian thought of Ratzinger per se, as he was accused of in the Ratzinger/Kasper debates. Rather this emphasis is due to his soteriology and epistemological emphasis on the work of God over that of humanity.10 Lisa Cahill locates the foundations of Benedict’s theology in the high Christology of the Gospel of John.11 Thus even the origin of his soteriology, and generally Hellenized philosophical outlook, may in fact be most strongly influenced by his relationship to the Johannine scriptural texts than by neo-platonic thought.12

As much as Ratzinger may root his soteriology in the incarnation, it is precisely the incarnation of logos—that which is an objective reality beyond and above the human person—which gives it validity. “Ratzinger has consistently opposed all projects giving priority to orthopraxy, and in so doing follows the lead of Romano Guardini, who as early as the late 1920s spoke of the primacy of the logos over ethos.”13 Building in continuity on the primacy of logos over ethos, Ratzinger emphasizes the “dimension of the historical Pasch of Christ” in the process of doing Eucharistic theology.14 This historical reality is understood to be intrinsic to the efficacy held by sacra-

10 Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis,” 16.
12 For example, I would argue that the Johannine ethics presented by Donald Senior have strong correlations to those offered by Benedict in Caritas in Veritate, though there is not time to flesh that out here. See: Donald Senior, “The Death of Jesus as Sign: A Fundamental Johannine Ethic,” in The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, ed. G. Van Belle (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 271-291.
Such an emphasis on the significance of the incarnation as a historical event inflects Ratzinger’s larger relationship to historical interpretation and further colors his aversion to praxis-based theological models.

Thus the fundamental starting point for all Ratzinger’s thought must be that which can be considered to possess objective truth—something transcendent and beyond the human person. As Eduardo Echeverria explains, “If what we do...takes precedence, irrespective of metaphysical or doctrinal commitments, then the objective reality that gives them their point become secondary, and thus we begin to lose our grounding in truth and, in consequence, these common practices become anthropocentric.” A lack of foundation in a transcendent truth allows individuals to no longer be bound by that which calls them beyond themselves but rather to be driven by their own ego.

This is evidenced in Ratzinger’s primary concern regarding the liturgy of our current age, namely the notion of “subject.” For him, the liturgy is the work of God. The human act of worship is a “response of gratitude and thanksgiving, in faith, to God inasmuch as these acts sacramentally participate in Jesus Christ’s historical, redemptive actions...” Thomas Dalzell observes that for Ratzinger, “The Eucharistic liturgy is received, not made, because salvation is received, not made.” Dalzell asserts that “Suchen was droben ist—seek what is Above—is a Leitmotif of [Ratzinger’s] theology.” This is all a demonstration of the “prioritizing of the vertical over the horizontal.” The nature of this priority comes from the understanding of Eucharist as gift. “Communion is primarily a gift from God. It originates from God’s initiative. It is firstly a new relationship between God and the world, established in the paschal mystery, and it extends to a new relationship between human beings.” Because of the strong emphasis Ratzinger places on the Eucharist as pure gift beyond itself, it holds its origins in a transcendent reality.

Thus the Eucharist is rooted, and therefore liturgy must be rooted, in the notion of looking toward the Lord. This is why Ratzinger has long supported the celebration of the Eucharist ad orientem, with priest and people facing the same direction, and influences his fondness for the liturgy of Pius V. He writes, “In this way we look together at the One whose death tore the veil of the Temple—the One who stands before the Father for us and encloses us in his arms in order to make us the new and living Temple.” Massa explains that for Ratzinger, “when it comes to the prayer of the church addressed to the Father, in the Son and through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is time to open up the ‘circle’ and look beyond ourselves to the gift that only the Triune God can bestow.” This is not to say there is an active disdain for the human experience, but rather that the human experience is only fully understood in light of a divine encounter originating outside ourselves.

This need to look “beyond ourselves” as the crucial foundation for Eucharistic theology not only emphasizes the transcendent as a source of the Eucharist, it also illuminates how the Eucharist inflects creation beyond the confines of humanity efficaciously and ontologically. As Joseph Murphy asserts, “Given the anthropocentric tendencies of modern thought, which have had deleterious effects on liturgical celebration, Joseph Ratzinger insists on the need to rediscover the cosmic dimension of the liturgy: the Christian liturgy transcends man to embrace the

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17 Echeverria, “Eucharistic Personalism,” 84.
18 Echeverria, “Eucharistic Personalism,” 76.
20 Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis,” 17.
24 Massa, “The Gift We Cannot Give Ourselves,” 166.
entire cosmos.” Emphasizing the origin of transformation as outside the self also places the human experience within the context of the broader reality of creation.

Vincent Twomey demonstrates the significance of cosmic awareness in Ratzinger’s thought as he notes, “According to Ratzinger, the cosmos has been brought into existence for one thing only: worship. More precisely, God called the cosmos into being so that humanity could share in God’s Sabbath rest and hence experience that life is good, and that creation, especially humanity is very good.” Ratzinger emphasizes the deep connection between liturgy and creation, and the cosmic implications of the liturgical act as it has organically developed from the earliest primordial human rituals. Ratzinger’s focus on the cosmic nature of the liturgy has one final “culmination... which is nothing less than the union of God with man, with all that that implies.” This union finds its center in the sacrificial nature of the sacrament.

The Gift of Sacrifice

According to Dalzell, “Ratzinger understands the Eucharist not so much as a meal, but the sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ.” He continues, “Ratzinger would contend that the meal was in fact extrinsic to what Jesus was doing. What was essential was not the eating of the lamb, but Jesus offering himself, and instituting the Eucharist as the definitive form of orthodoxy.” Even in the context of the Eucharistic meal, we see Ratzinger placing emphasis on logos over ethos. “There exists a unity between the Last Supper and the cross that is implicit in the renewed sacrificial meaning that Jesus gives to the former.” Thus the Last Supper becomes a means by which the paschal mystery is communicated. “The Passover is the form in which the essential Eucharistic reality—Christ’s involvement in self-offering—is imparted to the believing community.” This self-offering as sacrifice is not understood by Ratzinger in the sense of something being destroyed, but by that of something being transformed. “Sacrifice, in union with the eternal Logos Jesus Christ, means not destruction but offering to God one’s inmost being. For Ratzinger we are asking Christ to ‘logify’ us—to draw us into his worship of the Father ‘in spirit and in truth’ (John 4:23).” Thus the critical lens of Eucharistic thought is less a sharing of something between subjects (us) and more a participation in the kenotic gift of someone (Christ) and the subjects themselves (us).

This sacrifice also connects us to the concrete and historical reality of the paschal mystery, of the incarnation, and of God’s work in this plane of time and space as we know it as people. This sacrifice also transcends this plane of time and space allowing us to participate in the eternity of God’s self-gift. In “Ratzinger’s high theology of the liturgy...the Eucharistic sacrifice re-enacts that past atoning event by joining with that event in the eternal present of God.” “In the rich biblical sense, liturgical commemoration of some foundational event affords the

29 Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis,” 1.
30 Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis,” 2.
32 Massa, “The Gift We Cannot Give Ourselves,” 167. This may reflect a kenotic offering of those participating in the Eucharist thus participating in the sacrifice of Christ akin to the Eastern notion of Divinization. However, Ratzinger’s continued inflection of logos (and all that entails for him) gives forth a particularly western resonance. In his September 2006 lecture “Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections” at the University of Regensburg, Benedict defines logos as “both reason and word - a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason.” Although the notion of the word incarnate carries with it the aspects of personalism, self-communication, love and gift, it is also rational, scientific and intelligible.
worshipers a share in its saving effects...Our remembering is itself his grace which allows us to be drawn in the present moment into his saving action.”

Thus we also return to themes of the cosmic implications of the Eucharist and its capacity to ontologically impact creation. This is not simply a looking back, but a movement forward. “In Ratzinger’s rendering of Eucharistic worship, our communion is with the victorious Christ who has already drawn all of history to himself. He comes from the future to meet us, in order to lift us up into his eternal self-giving in love to the Father (Heb 12:18-24). His sacrifice becomes ours.”

Thus, “The Eucharist in the thought of the present Pope [emeritus] can be understood advantageously in an eschatological perspective.”

The nature of this transformation, of the “new creation,” of the eschaton encountered in the Eucharist toward which we should “open up,” can be understood as a reorientation of relationship, of the connection between God and humanity. Murphy describes this as follows:

> Because of the fall, worship comes to have a new aspect. It entails the healing of wounded freedom, atonement, purification, deliverance from estrangement. The essence of sacrifice (surrender of self to God in love) remains unchanged but it now assumes the aspect of healing, the loving transformation of broken freedom, of painful expiation.

This is manifest not only due to the self-giving of the Son to the Father but also in our call to unite ourselves in that surrender. In this sense, a true surrender to God builds upon Augustine’s *Civitas Dei*. “It consists in the union of man and creation with God. Belonging to God has nothing to do with destruction or non-being; it is a way of being. It means losing oneself as the only possible way of finding oneself...[this is] the purpose of the world, and the essence of sacrifice and worship.”

This is not something that occurs in isolation, nor is it restricted to the God-person relationship. It has communal implications. Massa notes that, for Benedict, “the Eucharist is the one necessary gift that only God can provide; and it is also a gift that transforms us into givers of the same healing love that we have received” and fosters unity. It is this transformation through self-gift that leads the community to realize a teleological imperative for Ratzinger, namely *communio* as defined in his Eucharistic ecclesiology.

**Eucharistic Ecclesiology as Communio**

The sacrifice of Christ that is God’s free and gratuitous gift, and our participation in it, makes us “one body.” But how is this understood and made manifest in the theology of Ratzinger? James Massa notes that this is the *raison d’être* of the Eucharist:

> The res tantum or ‘principal effect’ of the Sacrament is our incorporation into the mystical body of Christ, the church. For the present Pope [emeritus] as for many Eastern and Western ecclesiologists today, the Eucharist ‘makes’ the church just as surely as the church ‘makes’ the Eucharist. It is an essential constitution of the new people of God, as Ratzinger has sought to demonstrate in his interpretation of the core ecclesial doctrine of Vatican II.

This stands in contrast to Benedict’s contemporaries who would see the principle ecclesiology of Vatican II as modeled in a vision of an ongoing council, the people of God over the Body of Christ, *concilium over communio*. In attempting to unfold this intrinsic connection between the Eucharist and ecclesiology, Ratzinger seeks to

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36 Massa, “The Gift We Cannot Give Ourselves,” 166.
37 Murphy, “Joseph Ratzinger and the Liturgy,” 146.
38 Murphy, “Joseph Ratzinger and the Liturgy,” 145.
show how there is one single Church rather than an external and internal Church bound by the spirit or bound to Christ. In a sense this is to overcome the divisions of the reformation (the Church of Luther vs. the Church of Bellarmine). Building on both the need for knowledge originating in a revelation beyond humanity and the recognition of the incarnation, the Eucharist becomes the model that allows this bridge between the internal and external, invisible and visible, realities of the Church to be realized. “Ratzinger proposes to show how this is so by a consideration of the Eucharist, at once the most interior and spiritual, yet also exterior and social, reality that could be conceived.”41 “The Church presents the christological and pneumatological dimensions, as well as the sacramental and charismatic conditions that appear in the Eucharist.”42 Thus, the Eucharist creates “only one Church which is indivisible and at the same time a mystery of faith and a sign of faith: mystery-filled life and the visible manifestation of that life.”43 This sense of the unity of the Church and the capacity for the Eucharist to break down perceptions of dualism is what allows for ritual action to hold significant social implications.

Ratzinger was strongly influenced by Henri de Lubac’s insistence of the link between the Eucharist and ecclesiology leading to the development of his own Eucharistic ecclesiology or model of the Church as communio.44 Both de Lubac and Otto Semmelroth built upon the early and mid-twentieth-century Russian Orthodox theologians “who understood the fullness of the one church to be present in every community that celebrates the Eucharist.”45 De Lubac’s concept of Corpus Mysticum “emphasized that the church exists in Eucharistic communities and that she is a service for the transformation of the human person and the entire world.”46 This relationship proves so profound in Ratzinger that he sees the Last Supper, not Pentecost, as the founding of the Church,47 and has sought to demonstrate the real historical legitimacy of both the synoptic and Johannine accounts of this meal so far as to reemphasize the notion of sacrifice.

An ecclesiology building on this perspective is found in Sacrosanctum Concilium no. 41 which states:

...all should hold in great esteem the liturgical life of the diocese centered around the bishop...convinced that the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God’s holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar...

In drawing from the tradition passed to him from Russian theologians, Ratzinger does not emphasize liturgical ministries or draw from the image of assembly (like orthodox tradition) but rather pulls from Dominican John Stoykovič of Ragusa who claimed “the church is composed of three elements: confession (of the faith), communion (in the sacraments) and obedience (to the apostolic ministry which Christ founded).”48 This roots the Eucharist within a Church defined by its nature of being more than its constitutive parts.

Ratzinger, building from a Christological foundation of Church (he sees the Church as being inseparable from Christ), noted the inadequacy of the Church as the “People of God,” a term strongly promoted after the Second Vatican Council. He claimed it was overly sociological and devoid of a serious New Testament foundation. Instead, it was more rooted in Old Testament imagery. Other congregational movements that strongly emphasized the local community over the universality and “catholicity” of the Church also fell short in his mind. Both

43 Nichols, The Thought Of Benedict XVI, 137.
44 Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith, 13.
46 Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith, 84.
48 Nichols, The Thought Of Benedict XVI, 139.
these models, while having certain strengths, fail to account for the Church as communion and sacrament. Ratzinger prefers the image of the “Body of Christ,” again drawing from Paul, as representing a distinctively Christological and New Testament vision of Church. As Blanco explains:

The ecclesial model that Ratzinger proposes is the theology of the fathers of the Church, with a firm reliance on scripture. So the categories of the people of God and the body of Christ, the mystical and sacramental dimensions are at the same time merged into the Eucharistic ecclesiology of Communion.

The locus of Ratzinger’s Church may be found in the assembly but is not confined to the assembly because the universal church in communion is “ontologically and temporally prior” to the local Church, as he asserted in the document Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion promulgated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This is in keeping with the general epistemology he demonstrates as the foundation for his Eucharistic theology. “Both the structural conditions for the sacrament and its authorized texts presume that the assembly is being received into a reality that preexists it.” For the Pope [emeritus], the structure of the church-sacrament also requires that a certain priority be given to the one over the many. Why this is so becomes explicable from the manner in which the church is engendered.

The Church as communio is not simply a philosophical ideal. For Ratzinger it is both a spiritual reality and a visible historical manifestation. The Church is imbedded in historical structures and realities, local and universal. “The goal of the Church, her basic mission, is the incorporation of man into the life-rhythm of the Trinitarian God.”

Flowing from the Eucharist, the Church shares in the same res. In this way the Church as an a priori universal reflection of the love of God as unity manifests this in part through legitimate hierarchical structures visible in the communion between bishops and of the faithful to their bishop.

Massa explains the implications of this notion of communion: “This unity in episcopal and Eucharistic communion, expressed in concrete-historical terms as the universal church, ‘subsists’ concretely for Ratzinger, as it does for Vatican II, in the visible Catholic Church.” This understanding of the Church structure and hierarchy as a juridical and ontological nature of the Body of Christ is rooted in Pius XII’s Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi. This document, while “broadening and deepening the understanding of the complex network of relationships in which the Church is embodied,” emphasized the relationship between scripture, the sacraments, history, and society both within and outside of the Church, all couched in Trinitarian imagery.

To insure we do not see Ratzinger as now placing emphasis simply on the historical and structural unity of the Church rather than on the philosophical grounding of ecclesiology, Twomey describes the basic mechanism by which communio is brought about in relationship to the Eucharistic sacrifice:

In all his writings, the Church is seen as a divine/human reality that constitutes a communio—that is, mankind in the process of becoming one. The source of that unity is the Eucharist, the sacrament of the Paschal Mystery by which God in Christ reunited sinful mankind with himself. Communion in

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49 Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith, 86.
52 Massa, “The Priority of Unity,” 598.
53 Twomey, Benedict SVI, Pope and Leitourgos,” 59.
54 Massa, “The Priority of Unity,” 599.
55 Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith, 86.
and with the one Body and one Blood of Christ in the Eucharist transforms the faithful interiorly or spiritually into the one Body of Christ that is the Church.\textsuperscript{56}

This unity does not lead to the annihilation of the individual or the local church through their unity with the whole. The universal simply is the antecedent. “The church begins in the unity of divine \textit{communio} and ends in our assimilation to that unity.”\textsuperscript{57} This manifestation of Trinitarian love through the sacrificial nature of the paschal mystery is experienced within the individual as Eucharistic personalism. Ratzinger describes this reality as “a drive toward union, the overcoming of the barriers between God and Man, between ‘I’ and ‘thou’ in the new ‘we’ of the communion of saints.”\textsuperscript{58} Personalism is not, as it may sound, an individualistic concept, but rather one that recognizes the profound relationship necessary in what it is to be a person. It is a liturgical anthropology.

\textit{Communio Realized through Eucharistic Personalism: “I”, “Thou”, “We”, “Us”}

From a philosophical perspective, Ratzinger may be seen as “a fervent supporter of the personalism and existentialism of the beginning of the twentieth century”\textsuperscript{59} following in the thought of philosophers like Buber, Rosenzweig, Levinas, Ricoeur, and others, with the greatest similarity to Levinas.\textsuperscript{60} Ratzinger inserts critical distinctions, the first of which claims a greater historical nature to the human person and relationship.\textsuperscript{61} In a Christian context the human person “. . . has a face: he is not merely a number and he is firmly situated in love and in truth.”\textsuperscript{62} The call to relationship driven out of Eucharistic ecclesiology clearly has anthropological significance regarding the fulfillment of the human person in both vertical and horizontal relationship.

Personalism has been used by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI in attempts to counter subjectivity and rationalism in contemporary western society. Robert Tilley notes:

If in respect of personhood modernity privileges the idea of autonomy, then personalism privileges relation by way of communion. This doesn’t mean that individuality is annihilated; rather, the one can only be truly who one is from, in, and towards communion. The exemplar of this fact is God who is three Persons and yet one substance. As we are made in God’s image, then, in an analogical way, we too have our very being, our very particularity, in, through, and toward others.\textsuperscript{63}

This is the irony of the increasing hyper-individualism in western societies that focus on the primacy of the individual apart from the collective. In the light of personalism, to exalt individuality in such a way would actually undermine the legitimate dignity of the individual.

This phenomenon has been a long time concern for Ratzinger. A proper anthropology related to the nature of relationship reflected in personalism is witnessed to sacramentally and made real through \textit{communio} ecclesiology. This bond of unity does not hold as its aim the dissolving of the individual in the context of the larger whole. Rather, using nuptial imagery, Ratzinger notes that “a man and women are one flesh, that is in such a way that in their indissoluble spiritual-bodily union, they nonetheless remain unconfused and unmingled,” through a “pneumatic-real act of spousal love.”\textsuperscript{64} The Eucharist is the mode by which we come to witness this proper anthropology.

\textsuperscript{56} Twomey, “Benedict XVI, Pope and Leitourgos,” 58.
\textsuperscript{57} Massa, “The Priority of Unity,” 599.
\textsuperscript{58} Ratzinger, \textit{The Spirit of the Liturgy}, 87.
\textsuperscript{59} Blanco, “The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger,” 159.
\textsuperscript{60} Robert Tilley, \textit{Benedict XVI And The Search For Truth} (Strathfield: St. Paul Publications, 2007), 82.
\textsuperscript{61} Tilley, \textit{Benedict XVI And The Search For Truth}, 82.
\textsuperscript{63} Tilley, \textit{Benedict XVI And The Search For Truth}, 82.
Recognizing the deep intimate nature of relationship encountered in the Eucharist, Blanco demonstrates how the personalism of Ratzinger interacts to constitute *communio*:

> The mystery of the cross and the resurrection of Christ is a way of explaining more profoundly the enigma of human existence. We thus find ourselves in a Trinitarian moment formed by the ‘Us’ of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in a christological moment, in which the ‘me’ of the person finds the You of Jesus Christ, and an ecclesial moment, in which the ‘us’ of the Church is created.\(^\text{65}\)

The significance of the Body of Christ, of true *communio* as manifest within the Church, comes to be only when individual subjects become aware not only of their own existence, but of the existence of the other. True human fulfillment exists in the context of relationship with the other. This would be a relationship in light of the sacrificial and kenotic reality of the Eucharist through which members of humanity can fully give themselves to God and thus to one another. This is possible precisely because of God’s acting gift of sacrifice.

To understand this relationship within the Trinity and how we as individuals come to be assumed into that unity, there is a need to speak of the *exitus* of the gratuitous sacrifice from God seeking to transform the world and the *reditus* of the creature’s response in accepting and participating in the gift. Thus we build a dialogue of love by responding in relationship. In this relationship “the being of the other is not absorbed or abolished, but in giving itself it becomes fully itself, in a higher kind of unity.”\(^\text{66}\) Eucharistic personalism is, referencing back to the notion of sacrifice as the constitutive center of Eucharistic meaning, “the radical self-giving, the giving away of oneself to God the Father, in Christ, the Logos, who is the Son, through the Holy Spirit.”\(^\text{67}\) This again emphasizes the Trinitarian and sacrificial nature of relationship that forms the bonds of love definitive of *communio* and made sacramental through sacrifice.

In describing *communio* realized through Eucharistic personalism and how it is lived and manifested among the faithful, Ratzinger builds upon the notion of Hans Urs von Balthasar referred to as the “christological constellation” of characters or types.” These are “to be found in the life of Christ as presented in the scriptures.” This refers to the multitude of spiritual missions within the church allowing for all people to respond to the “same core” but with different “modes of participation.”\(^\text{68}\) Ratzinger is fond of the image of a symphony demonstrating the interdependency within a group while allowing individuals to serve particular and unique functions. Again emphasizing the *a priori* source of knowledge within his thought, these charisms are gifts from God and not chosen by individuals.

This concrete personal relationship formed with Christ manifests itself beyond the confines of the Eucharistic rituals and can be seen to be lived out in relationship in the “liturgy after the liturgy.”\(^\text{69}\) Ratzinger writes:

> That is never just a physical, bodily act, as when I eat a slice of bread. So it can therefore never be something that happens just in a moment. To receive Christ means to move toward him, to adore him. For that reason, the reception can stretch out beyond the time of the Eucharistic celebration; indeed, it has to do so.\(^\text{70}\)

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66 Murphy, “Joseph Ratzinger and the Liturgy,” 145.
68 Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 89.
Again, Ratzinger claims “Eucharistic personalism is a drive toward union, the overcoming of the barriers between God and man, between ‘I’ and ‘thou’ in the new ‘we’ of the communion of saints.”\(^{71}\) This aspect of the liturgy that is indeed a cosmic component involving the person but also all of creation reflects Ratzinger’s assertion of the “intrinsic connection between the cosmic liturgy and a transformed existence, which entails a commitment to transforming the world for Christ’s sake.”\(^{72}\) True personalism, then, may expand beyond confines of human-divine relationship and recognize a union of all creation. It is a fundamental call to self-transcendence of the human person in response to and through participation in the self-transcendence of God.

So what would this transformation of the world entail? Massa notes “the fruits of such devotion are to be found, for Ratzinger, precisely in those works of love and justice to which the justified believer is directed.”\(^{73}\) Although initially expressed most strongly in the encyclical \textit{Deus Caritas Est}, Benedict begins to build a relationship between the orthodoxy of his Eucharistic theology and the praxis that manifests the implications of such thought on real social and ethical considerations in our world. In short, there can be seen a direct evolution of the Eucharistic epistemology, notions of sacrifice, Eucharistic ecclesiology, and personalism of Ratzinger (all categorized as orthodoxy) into the real impulse toward action in society and the world by Benedict (categorized as orthopraxis). To live a life of Eucharistic personalism is to enter into the sacrifice of Christ. In so doing, as a community, we are transformed into the Body of Christ and manifest Eucharistic ecclesiology as \textit{communio}. This manifestation has concrete social implications for the way Christians structure and live in society. This is clearly tangible in \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}.

\textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}

In his first post-synodal apostolic exhortation, \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}, Pope Benedict XVI asserts the social dimension of his Eucharistic theology more strongly. Alcuin Reid claims “the policy he outlines in \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis} is not the opinion of Joseph Ratzinger (though there is clear continuity here): it is what the supreme Pontiff has judged to be apposite for the whole Church, liturgically, theologically and pastorally.”\(^{74}\) Thomas Rausch observes, “what emerges here is the new voice of Pope Benedict as universal pastor, not that of the professor.”\(^{75}\) The thesis of the document is “to reawaken and increase Eucharistic faith, to improve the quality of Eucharistic celebration, to promote Eucharistic adoration and to encourage a practical solidarity which, starting from the Eucharist, would reach out to those in need.”\(^{76}\) Much of the document, due to its pastoral significance, expresses concrete responses to real liturgical, formational, and spiritual questions. The pastoral issues raised by the synod and addressed in the document will not as a whole be the focus in this discussion. The theological foundations of the document will be of particular interest here.

\textit{Sacramentum Caritatis} begins with the foundations of belief in the Eucharist. Reid notes, “Benedict still remains committed to his orthodoxy as the antecedent to praxis.” The term “sacrifice” appears over 40 times in the document.\(^{77}\) Asserting the presence of Ratzinger’s sacrificial \textit{leitmotif}, Rausch claims that the

\textit{...frequent use of the terms worship and liturgy reflects his understanding of the Eucharist as God’s work, as our incorporation into the sacrifice of Christ. The emphasis is on the Eucharist as the work}

\(^{71}\) Ratzinger, \textit{The Spirit of the Liturgy}, 87.
\(^{72}\) Echeverria, “Eucharistic Personalism,” 93.
\(^{73}\) Massa, “The Gift We Cannot Give Ourselves,” 167.
\(^{75}\) Rausch, \textit{Pope Benedict XVI}, 132.
\(^{77}\) Rausch, \textit{Pope Benedict XVI}, 133.
of Christ. There is less emphasis on how the faithful join in the celebration beyond their uniting themselves with Christ’s sacrifice.\(^78\)

Sacrificial themes in the document are evidenced by the assertion that “Jesus shows the salvific meaning of his death and resurrection, a mystery which renews history and the whole cosmos” (no. 10). The document places great emphasis on “gift” as sacrifice and sacrifice as “gift,” and the relationship between this gift making the Church and thus allowing the Church to be made. For, “the Eucharist is Christ who gives himself to us and continually builds us up as his body” (no. 14).

Emphasizing Eucharistic ecclesiology, the document reaffirms that “the res of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the unity of the faithful within ecclesial communion. The Eucharist is thus found at the root of the Church as a mystery of communion” (no. 15). This flows into a theme evident in the other writings of Ratzinger, but which may be more emphasized here and as a result provide for a greater call to connect Eucharistic faith with social realities. That is, namely that the Church is the sacrament of “trinitarian communion” (no. 16). This notion, which can be foundational both for \textit{communio} and for Eucharistic personalism ultimately resulting in the transformation of the world and society, is the theological lens through which Benedict examines the Eucharist in the document.

Aspects of Eucharistic personalism are evident. The focus on relationship between subjects and not objects is made clear when he states “Jesus does not give us a ‘thing,’ but himself; he offers his own body and pours out his own blood” (no. 7). This is held in the context of Trinitarian love (no. 8). This is further emphasized by noting that “the personal relationship which the individual believer establishes with Jesus present in the Eucharist constantly points beyond itself to the whole communion of the Church and nourishes a fuller sense of membership in the Body of Christ” (no. 68). This manifestation of personalism as a constitutive aspect of \textit{communio} also draws from Ratzinger’s sense of history. “Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman” (no. 77).\(^79\) There is an ontological basis and not simply an ethical narrative involved in the Eucharistic encounter through which \textit{communio} is built through personalism.

Blanco outlines the mechanism of movement from Ratzinger’s Eucharistic ecclesiology and Eucharistic personalism to the Church’s mission in the world. “[Ratzinger] reminds us of the simultaneous horizontal and vertical dimensions of the Church, at once theological and sociological. But he always emphasizes the vertical, the total dependence of the Church and the ministry of Christ and the trinitarian communion.”\(^80\) Supporting these claims, Dalzell notes that the Eucharist, for Ratzinger, does have social significance even if they are secondary:

The social is not absent from [Ratzinger’s] Eucharistic theology. Nevertheless, like Balthasar, unity with Christ comes first, unity with neighbour second. Contemplating Christ in the Eucharist leads to the realisation that one is united with every other person receiving him. Only as such, is the Eucharist a social sacrament.\(^81\)

However, to place the emphasis on vertical aspects of the Eucharist is not to relegate social implications. Rather, as transcendent reality is the necessary foundation for theological discourse for Ratzinger, so is transcendent truth the grounding of social transformation for the Pope Emeritus.

\(^78\) Rausch, \textit{Pope Benedict XVI}, 134.
\(^79\) A further connection that will be mentioned but not extensively explored in this paper is the possible parallels between the \textit{ars celebrandi} and \textit{communio} and \textit{actuosa participatio} and Eucharistic personalism.
\(^81\) Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis,” 2.
The discussion of the strong social implications of the Eucharist in *Sacramentum Caritatis* is not advocating “liturgical horizontalism” or a strict “verticalism.” The document emphasizes the real need for social transformation but situates the origin of this transformation within *logos* rather than *ethos*. According to Eduardo Echeverria, Ratzinger holds the view that “liturgical horizontalism is the fruit of a non-doctrinal Catholicism, a this-worldly mentality, and a social gospel of justice and peace, which is chiefly concerned with the transformation of society itself as the purpose of liturgy.”

However, in light of the developments of the document discussed here it would appear that the transformation of society itself is a purpose of the liturgy insofar as society exists as a constitutive part of creation that finds its transformation through the Eucharistic act. This ultimately comes to semantics of ends and means. “To rightly fully participate in the Eucharist converts existence into communion and sacrifice, petition and expiation; the gratuitous gift of Christ in God and brothers.”

In light of the developments present in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, it may not be that the vertical takes priority over the horizontal but rather that the vertical necessitates the horizontal while at the same time the horizontal relationship is impossible absent from the vertical. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis, belief and ethics, *logos* and *ethos* begin to fold upon each other. “In order to fully live the Eucharist the consciences of Christians are also implicated with respect to social life.” This does not displace *logos* with *ethos* but rather re-asserts the primary beginning point that leads to the raising of conscience. “The causal influence of the Eucharist at the Church’s origins definitively discloses both the chronological and ontological priority of the fact that it was Christ who loved us ‘first’” (no. 82). “It is the new and eternal covenant in the blood of the true immolated lamb that begins the transformation of the heart of the Christian and completes the transformation of the cosmos.”

The inauguration of this new creation has a strong pneumatological dimension, focusing not only on the incarnational and historical actions of Christ, but also on the movement of the Spirit as the one who makes things new. As Pellitero notes, “In this transformation the Holy Spirit holds a central role.” The emphasis on the Spirit may be an opening for this evolution, for as Rausch notes, *Sacramentum Caritatis* “is far more pneumatological than [Ratzinger’s] earlier books on the liturgy.” Although of more recent development in his own theological discourse, a pneumatological focus is in keeping with the Eastern origins of much of the rest of Ratzinger’s Eucharistic theology. The work of the spirit in the epiclesis and, then in the spiritual transformation that would flow from the liturgy to the world from those who have participated in the mystery, emphasizes that “to bring all things to God is to bring the divine life to all things.” The Pope Emeritus writes:

> The substantial conversion of bread and wine into his body and blood introduces within creation the principle of a radical change, a sort of ‘nuclear fission’,...which penetrates to the heart of all being, a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all. (no. 11)

Indeed, this is how the *sacrum facere* (to make holy) is completed in the sacrifice, to reference Augustine. Through this transformation in the Eucharist the full value of humanity is realized. Through the outpouring of

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83 “es necesaria una plena participación en la Eucaristía que vaya convirtiendo la existencia en comunión y sacrificio, petición y expiación, don gratuito de sí mismo, en Dios, a los hermanos” (Ramiro Pellitero, “La eficacia transformadora de la eucaristía: eucaristía, iglesia y existencia cristiana en la exhortación postsinodal *Sacramentum Caritatis*,” *Scripta Theologica* 40, no. 1 (2008): 115. [Translation mine.])
84 “las consciencias de los cristianos para que vivan plenamente la Eucaristía también en lo que implica con respecto a la vida social” (Pellitero, “La eficacia transformadora de la eucaristía,” 108. [Translation mine.])
85 “Es la nueva y eternal alianza en la sangre del verdadero Cordero inmolado, que comienza transformando el corazón del cristiano y termina transformando el cosmos” (Pellitero, “La eficacia transformadora de la eucaristía,” 109. [Translation mine.])
86 “En esa transformación tiene un papel central el Espíritu Santo” (Pellitero, “La eficacia transformadora de la eucaristía,” 109. [Translation mine.])
the spirit, Christ “makes us, in the gift of the Eucharist, sharers in God’s own life” (no. 88). The spirit may be the mechanism by which Ratzinger’s personalism and communio are realized. It is the spirit that allows this transformed nature to bleed into the world.

“Because through the Eucharist the spiritual life of the Christian is formed, both the Christian personally and the whole Church together can configure themselves existentially and socially with the characteristics of the Eucharistic celebration: worship of the Father, proclamation of the faith, service to the world etc.” Thus we see the full social implications of right worship. “Worship, [as] the right kind of relationship with God, is essential for the right kind of human existence in the world. It reaches beyond everyday existence, giving us a share in the world of God and allowing the light of that world of heaven to fall into ours.” Within the epistemological approach of Ratzinger, to emphasize appropriate worship is not to ignore human suffering, but the origin for the transformation necessary to address it.

It would seem self-evident that Christian based charity (as love) would originate from the movement of God given that “our faith and the Eucharistic liturgy both have their source in the same event: Christ’s gift of himself in the Paschal Mystery” (no. 34). Sacramentum Caritatis demonstrates the outflowing of the actio Dei. For, “it enables us to appreciate how God invites man to participate in bringing to fulfillment his handiwork, and in so doing, gives human labor its authentic meaning, since, through the celebration of the Eucharist, it is united to the redemptive sacrifice of Christ” (no. 47). Thus, our greatest capacity as peoples is realized only in the love of God which we come to know and participate in through a Eucharist that recognizes the transcendent movement of God’s self-gift.

A full Eucharistic spirituality indeed flows from the altar to the world for “there can be no actuosa participatio in the sacred mysteries without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ’s love into the life of society” (no. 51). “The worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence” (no. 71). For, “Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here, the intrinsically Eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape” (no. 71). This also imparts the eschatological reality of the Eucharist (not addressed at length here). By becoming a “new creation” in the Eucharist, the individual is “capable of bearing witness in his surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires him” (no. 64). It is in this hope that, due to our Eucharistic communion of becoming one with Christ, the individual is given “a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy” (no. 66). Having encountered the eschatological vision within the experience of the Eucharist we can glimpse the possibility for the concrete transformation in our world that can reflect the eschaton of God’s salvation.

It is precisely due to Benedict’s assertion of a liturgical theology that emphasizes the vertical that gives life to his vision of a horizontal social ethic. For, “it is on the day consecrated to God that men and women come to understand the meaning of their lives and also of their work” (no. 74). The distinction of the vertical preceding the horizontal begins to break down in the more contemporary thought of Benedict. “Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: it is a communion with God and a communion with our brothers and sisters. Both dimensions mysteriously converge in the gift of the Eucharist” (no. 76). The intimate union of both love of God and love of neighbor may in fact require a new sense of time and geometry, one that the sacrificial nature of Ratzinger’s theology already may possess. Thus rather than saying the vertical is before

90 “Porque la Eucaristía a través del culto es forma de la vida cristiana, tanto el cristiano personalmente como la iglesia en su conjunto pueden configurarse existencial y socialmente con las características de la celebración eucarística: culto al padre, anuncio de la fe, servicio al mundo, etc.” (Pellitero, “La eficacia transformadora de la eucaristía,” 115. [Translation mine.])
91 Murphy, “Joseph Ratzinger and the Liturgy,” 143.
the horizontal—or that they are even discretely separate directions, distinctions, or realms—this ordering may function more in the sense of a liturgical and mystagogical catechesis for the development of the human person and society. The true nature of both aspects of relationship is in fact inseparable. Emphasis is placed on the primacy of the vertical simply to allow us to more fully enter into the Eucharistic mystery as the actio Dei and not because human experience is insignificant.

This is reflected in a very simple explanation found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “All men are called to the same end: God himself. There is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love. Love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God” (no. 1887). If love of neighbor is inseparable from love of God, and if to fully live the Eucharistic mystery is to enact that love in the social forum, then our act of emphasizing the worship of God in the Eucharist and the love of neighbor in daily life may be seen as a ritual deconstruction of this one-and-the-same interplay of love. Is it possible to construct a prescribed timeline that relates the encounter of vertical love to the manifestation of horizontal love? In reality it would seem that as one is “taken up” more into the divine life one expresses a deeper love of neighbor as well. Thus the sequential relationship between worship of God in liturgy and response to ones neighbor in daily life may be seen more as a distillation and ritual representation of an inseparably interconnected exchange of gratuitous living between God and the Christian and the Christian and her neighbor. In the Eucharistic celebrations there is the ritualized distinction between the actions of taking, breaking, and giving. In the same way, the Eucharist may act as a catechetical demonstration—a ritual distillation—through mystagogical reflection, of the distinct highlight of love of God and the gift of God that then allows for appropriate social transformation. Thus we have ritualized for the sake of meditative reflection the distinct aspects of God’s love for us, our response in love to God, and our response in love to neighbor. Although ritually distinct, in their metaphysical root our love for God expressed in our “orthodoxy” is inseparable from our love of neighbor expressed in our “orthopraxis.”

The real ramification is that through Eucharistic encounter the world is transformed through God’s love in our action. “Our communities, when they celebrate the Eucharist, must become ever more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist thus compels all who believe in him to become ‘bread that is broken’ for others, and to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world” (no. 88). Thus “the Eucharist becomes in life what it signifies in its celebration” (no. 89) when we recognize the significance of union with Christ and all the horizontal implications that a vertical relationship would imply. “The recognition of this fact leads to a determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for the dignity of all men and women, created in God’s image and likeness” (no. 89). Through Sacramentum Caritatis we can see clearly that “Orthopraxis does have its place in [Benedict’s] theology, as the transformation of horizontal solidarity into Christian responsibility for others.” This is seen as Benedict develops themes of Trinitarian love and gift expressed in his Eucharistic theology and their direct and inseparable significance within human relationships.

In light of Deus Caritas Est, Sacramentum Caritatis, and now Caritas in Veritate, Blanco’s observation that, speaking of his corpus of writings broadly, “Ratzinger insists continuously on the indissoluble union between love and truth” is indeed correct. There is a clear evolution toward an orthopraxis growing from the orthodoxy of his Eucharistic theology revealing tangibly and sacramentally communio in the world. Caritas becomes a vehicle for transcendent reality, in effect a sacrament. It is the act of Christian Charity that explicates the validity of Christian faith in truth.

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92 Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis,” 17.
Truth needs to be sought, found and expressed within the ‘economy’ of charity, but charity in its turn needs to be understood, confirmed and practiced in the light of truth. In this way, not only do we do a service to charity enlightened by truth, but we also help give credibility to truth, demonstrating its persuasive and authenticating power in the practical setting of social living.  

In fact, the acts of love on behalf of the Church are an expression of the visible sign that is the Church as sacrament. To see Church as sacrament, the sacrament of communio, of the unity of creation with the divine, “implies that the church is the visible sign that encompasses those other moments of signifying grace. Like them, the church-sign points beyond itself to God’s presence and action in history, which are mediated to human beings through the very act of signification.” The sacrament of communio is expressed broadly as a visible sign to the world through the sacramental presence of caritas; that is caritas as an incarnation of the self-sacrificing love of God.

In the encyclical letter Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict XVI outlines a social philosophy, a foundational model of social interaction, economic relationships, anthropology, and ecology that function for Christians and for “all people of good will” as a means toward a praxis for living the reality that is the “inseparability” between love of God and love of neighbor. Although this document will not be explored here, it is important to mention specific themes that build upon the larger Eucharistic theological patrimony of Ratzinger and the developments seen in Benedict’s Sacramentum Caritatis. There is a strong emphasis on recognizing that the action of social, structural, economic, and political transformation comes about through the action and offering of God’s love, not through human initiative alone. This flows into the call to live life from a perspective of gratuitous giving. Constant themes of solidarity and subsidiarity express a wider application of notions of communio and personalism to the entire human family. Because of this, there is an understanding of the potential for transformation through integral, or authentic human development in relationship to the “human ecology” that has strong pneumetological significance. Thus, through Caritas in Veritate we can see the trajectory of Benedict’s orthopraxis not stalling at Sacramentum Caritatis but rather pushing forward with even more praxical and socio-political implications. This gives great emphasis to the horizontal thrust present in the post-synodal exhortation and would provide great interest for future scholarship, demonstrating a social ethic implicitly rooted in a Eucharistic theology but directed toward concrete social engagement not as something secondary to the Christian life, but as the direct outflowing of its source and summit.

Significant Questions

Benedict’s Eucharistic theology is eloquent and provides a strong foundation for a potential vision of social transformation rooted in Trinitarian love. However, a primary question is: if we are to participate in the “new creation” inspired by the Eucharistic center of our lives, does the form of liturgy advocated for by the Pope Emeritus actually inspire this reality? If a particular res of the Eucharist is union with God and with one another, is that being realized outside the liturgical rituals of many traditional Latin Mass communities? Are the more socially engaged communities who often participate in liturgies contrary to the vision of Benedict enacting meaningful human development not due to transcendent love but because of an anthropocentrically “closed circle?” From my limited experience amidst various communities, I have to question the real effectual capacity of liturgy to manifest that which it is in the larger socio-political fabric of society. Rather, at least in the United States, it can be substantially argued that factors outside the Church probably have a greater influence on a Christian’s social and relational awareness than their mystagogical formation at Mass. And even if it is so, given the highly indi-

vidualistic tendencies of U.S. society and the larger impact of that cultural milieu on globalization, are liturgies
that emphasize individual prayer and worlds completely beyond our own capable of forming a body of Christ
that comes to represent what Benedict wishes to see in the social sphere?

These are questions without clear answers. If it is true that love originates in God but that there is not as clear
a distinction between loving God and loving neighbor as we would sometimes like to believe, then there is not
as clear a distinction between orthodoxy and orthopraxis as theological proponents in each camp may want to
claim. This raises the question: is praxis as negative a starting point for theology and liturgy as Ratzinger often
claimed it is? Eamon Duffy provides a good explanation of the liturgical experiences of the young Joseph Ratz-
inger and their impact on his liturgical theology. Much of what has been discussed in this paper holds its origins
in a pious Bavarian childhood, something that Ratzinger himself writes about. If this is the case, it can be argued
that Benedict’s thought is itself evidence of the epistemological foundations of the theological anthropology
of Rahner and Schillebeeckx, a premise from which Ratzinger has continually distanced himself. “Ratzinger the
theologian understands the nature of tradition as an organic cumulative growth, a plant unfolding, not a ma-
chine constructed.” This explains why he has been so critical of “the introduction into the Church’s worship of
a restless modern obsession with change and innovation for their own sakes, and a preoccupation with human
community which excludes or hinders true openness to God.”

Is such a truly organic development still possible in an age in which systematic and scientific fields of ritual stud-
ies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc. have significant bearing on how we understand and experience
liturgy? Of interesting note here are Benedict’s comments on the source of truth and knowledge in relationship
to social doctrine in Caritas in Veritate. “Open to the truth, from whichever branch of knowledge it comes, the
Church’s social doctrine receives it, assembles into a unity the fragments in which it is often found, and medi-
ates it within the constantly changing life-patterns of the society of peoples and nations” (no. 9). This represents
a certain development from his previous suspicions of systems of thinking from non-Christian origins. To apply
this same theology to liturgical development, however, could break down the fundamental understanding of the
liturgy as something given to us, of something that speaks of a transcendent truth. “For Ratzinger...the power
of the Tradition to mediate to us the Divine is derived from the fact that we experience that tradition as a given,
something which is the distillation of the Church’s age-old encounter with her Lord, and emphatically not some-
thing we make up or improvise for ourselves.” Thus Benedict may understand social theory to be contextual
and evolving. This developing and responsive praxis oriented theology, then, must be rooted in and inspired by
the transcendent, objective, and logos oriented wisdom of the liturgy.

Conclusion

The aforementioned questions and critiques are valid and point to some of the larger controversies surrounding
both the social and liturgical traditions of the Church culminating most concretely in the methodological divides
alluded to earlier: should the starting point for doing theology be logos or ethos, and should it culminate most
significantly in communio or concilium? Beyond that, there is a clear attraction to a person-centered theologi-
cal method because it is something that we know we can understand, trace, and explore. There is the risk, as
implied by Duffy, that when searching for pure and distilled transcendent theological truths one may potentially
conflate his or her human experience as objective normativity.

However, Benedict’s larger vision is coherent within itself recognizing that the human spirit through both worship and social engagement is directed outward and upward toward the divine in response to the love of the incarnation. Constructing both a Eucharistic spirituality and social ethic from this perspective ensures the pr

imacy of God in the movement of the Christian life and guards against the reductionism of both ritual and social action to an anthropocentric sociological tautology. While some of the critics of Benedict’s approaches, from the liberation movements for example, may point to a seeming lack of horizontal relationality, he would counter that he is seeking a broad sense of connection elevating all of creation, and in so doing humanity along with it, into the life of the Trinity.

As discussed previously, the significance of Benedict’s orientation and epistemological foundation for exploring a liturgical spirituality that is realized through real social transformation is that he holds both the origin and telos of this reality in the transcendent logos. By orienting the primacy of social engagement not as the central role of Christian life but as the most pure sacramental expression of a larger movement of salvation, we may find a more significant ontological undergirding and motivation for movements seeking peace and justice. It also prevents the diminishment of Christian charity to a spiritually devoid humanism or something that can be set apart from the intrinsic calling of the human person. This does not reduce the significance of praxis as constitutive of faith but may rather strengthen its role.

To attempt to say it succinctly, Benedict sees a strong imperative for social engagement—but as a constitutive element of a broader soteriology, teleology, and anthropology. The Eucharist is the central mode by which we connect with this significant movement of God and toward God and therefore models for us how we are to be transformed through our participation of this mystery. In so doing, a life of charity and thus socially conscious choices is inseparable from this movement of conversion. The Eucharist is the model, not of a perfect society, but of a perfect anthropology that if lived concretely has as its consequence solidarity, justice, and peace. Thus social action is no less significant in the life of the Church, it is however not the primary goal.

We can see clearly that, “for Ratzinger, orthodoxy without orthopraxis is empty; and orthopraxis without orthodoxy is blind.” Historically the Pope Emeritus would assert “the main point of acting charitably in the world is not to improve the lot of one’s fellow human beings, but to witness to the supernatural. Acts of charity reveal the inspiring reality and power of God and love of God.” This is still in keeping with the vision presented in Sacramentum Caritatis and Caritas in Veritate. However, as Cahill points out, Benedict’s perspective has been widened to a more global praxis. In this development, he is still honest to his wider methodology. “Ratzinger maintains the habitual scheme of dialogue, personalist, communitarian, christological and trinitarian at the same time as reaching the final consequences of the existence of freedom as a supreme gift, which has to reach truth and love.”

There are many questions that can be raised at this point. What are implications on Eucharistic theology in light of the growth and development of orthopraxis in Caritas in Veritate? What effects does a widening recognition of the universality of the human family, of solidarity, subsidiarity, and a more expansive pneumatology have on our understanding of Church, ecclesiology, and Christology? Could a developing social doctrine within the corpus of Benedict’s magisterium have larger implications on his approach to liturgy? As he continues to write as Pope Emeritus and as a theologian can these aspects of his theology reciprocally inform one another or will the present trajectory of his social teaching no longer stand in dialogue with his Eucharistic theology but rather develop separately from it and beyond it?

100 Dalzell, “Eucharist, Communion and Orthopraxis,” 11.
If Pope Benedict “looks east” it is not because he is abandoning the world and the sufferings of human persons. He has not distanced himself from the hope of *Gaudium et Spes* as many contend. Rather, he stands gazing outward because as Henri De Lubac asserted, “when it comes to a change in our reality, the natural world is not only ‘elevated’ by the supernatural but actually ‘transformed’ by it.” 103 To reference a bumper sticker sold by the infamous conservative catholic blogger “Fr. Z,” “save the liturgy, save the world.” 104 The traditional movements in the Church may not agree with the social ramifications of Benedict’s liturgical vision, and socially concerned groups in the Church may feel uncomfortable with his liturgical sensibilities. It may be precisely because Benedict does not easily align within polarized camps that his theological approach and conclusions are a synthesized foundation to build further unity within the Church.

Indeed, Pope Francis, though seen as so very different from Benedict, has taken the charge of the social gospel from where his predecessor left off in the apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* and the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* and has driven it to the world in a clear and definitive way in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. Francis elaborates on a social gospel that was brought to the fore by the liturgical thought and Eucharistic theology of Pope Benedict. And even now, Francis is beginning to explore the Eucharist more fully. As curial commentators compare the two pontiffs, Francis’ lively preaching style is emphasized while Benedict’s liturgical grandeur in his *ars celebrandi* is discussed.

This is not to say that Francis does not think of the Eucharist. During his February 10th homily at Casa Santa Marta the Holy Father proclaimed, “When we celebrate the Mass, we don’t accomplish a representation of the Last Supper: no, it is not a representation. It is something else: it is the Last Supper itself. It is to really live once more the Passion and the redeeming Death of the Lord. It is a theophany...”105 The catechesis for his General Audiences on the 5th and 12th of the same month also focused on the Eucharist. Although he keeps to his accessible and approachable style, the emphasis on the relationship between the Eucharist and the transcendent and the Eucharist and social concerns are evident.

Benedict summarizes the transformative role of the Eucharist in society as he writes,

...the Eucharist itself powerfully illuminates human history and the whole cosmos. In this sacramental perspective we learn, day by day, that every ecclesial event is a kind of sign by which God makes himself known and challenges us. The Eucharistic form of life can thus help foster a real change in the way we approach history and the world.106

Thus we can see that “charity always manifests God’s love in human relationships as well, it gives theological and salvific value to all commitment for justice in the world.”107 If this is true, the lasting *magisterium* of Pope Benedict may provide the real and necessary phenomenological and ontological foundation upon which the increasingly popular vision of a joyful, Christian life promoted by Pope Francis can take root. Francis writes in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, “The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.”108 Indeed, it may be in Benedict’s Eucharistic theology that this evangelizing beauty may be seen.

104 Father John Zuhlsdorf’s blog is found at wdtprs.com.
Through it a unifying point between growing polarities within the Church and world may find common ground. It is through Benedict’s lens of transcendence that the earthy call of Francis may find meaning and purpose.