**EUCHARIST**

**The Lima Document**

I. THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST

1. The Church receives the eucharist as a gift from the Lord. St Paul wrote: “I have

received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when

he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: `This is

my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of me.’ In the same way

also the cup, after supper, saying: `This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as

often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ “ (I Cor. 11:23–25; cf. Matt. 26:26–29; Mark

14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20).

The meals which Jesus is recorded as sharing during his earthly ministry proclaim and

enact the nearness of the Kingdom, of which the feeding of the multitudes is a sign. In his

last meal, the fellowship of the Kingdom was connected with the imminence of Jesus’

suffering. After his resurrection, the Lord made his presence known to his disciples in the

breaking of the bread. Thus the eucharist continues these meals of Jesus during his earthly

life and after his resurrection, always as a sign of the Kingdom. Christians see the eucharist

prefigured in the Passover memorial of Israel’s deliverance from the land of bondage and

in the meal of the Covenant on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24). It is the new paschal meal of the

Church, the meal of the New Covenant, which Christ gave to his disciples as the *anamnesis*

of his death and resurrection, as the anticipation of the Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

Christ commanded his disciples thus to remember and encounter him in this sacramental

meal, as the continuing people of God, until his return. The last meal celebrated by Jesus

was a liturgical meal employing symbolic words and actions. Consequently the eucharist is

a sacramental meal which by visible signs communicates to us God’s love in Jesus Christ,

the love by which Jesus loved his own “to the end” (John13:1). It has acquired many

names: for example, the Lord’s Supper, the breaking of bread, the holy communion, the

divine liturgy, the mass. Its celebration continues as the central act of the Church’s

worship.

II. THE MEANING OF THE EUCHARIST

2. The eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in

Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian receives this gift of salvation

through communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the eucharistic meal, in the eating

and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. God himself

acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. In accordance with

Christ’s promise, each baptized member of the body of Christ receives in the eucharist the

assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28) and the pledge of eternal life (John 6:51-

58). Although the eucharist is essentially one complete act, it will be considered here under

the following aspects: thanks- giving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the

Spirit, communion of the faithful, meal of the Kingdom.

*A. The Eucharist as Thanksgiving to the Father*

3. The eucharist, which always includes both word and sacrament, is a proclamation

and a celebration of the work of God. It is the great thanksgiving to the Father for

everything accomplished in creation, redemption and sanctification, for everything

accomplished by God now in the Church and in the world in spite of the sins of human

beings, for everything that God will accomplish in bringing the Kingdom to fulfilment.

Thus the eucharist is the benediction (*berakah*) by which the Church expresses its

thankfulness for all God’s benefits.

4. The eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise by which the Church speaks on behalf of

the whole creation. For the world which God has reconciled is pre- sent at every eucharist:

in the bread and wine, in the persons of the faithful, and in the prayers they offer for

themselves and for all people. Christ unites the faithful with himself and includes their

prayers within his own intercession so that the faithful are trans- figured and their prayers

accepted. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ, with him and in him. The

bread and wine, fruits of the earth and of human labour, are presented to the Father in

faith and thanksgiving. The eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an

offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ,

a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit.

*B. The Eucharist as Anamnesis or Memorial of Christ*

5. The eucharist is the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ, i.e. the living and

effective sign of his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative

on behalf of all humankind. The biblical idea of memorial as applied to the eucharist refers

to this present efficacy of God’s work when it is celebrated by God’s people in a liturgy.

6. Christ himself with all that he has accomplished for us and for all creation (in his

incarnation, servant-hood, ministry, teaching, suffering, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension

and sending of the Spirit) is present in this *anamnesis*, granting us communion with him—

self. The eucharist is also the foretaste of his *parousia* and of the final kingdom.

7. The *anamnesis* in which Christ acts through the joyful celebration of his Church is

thus both representation and anticipation. It is not only a calling to mind of what is past

and of its significance. It is the Church’s effective proclamation of God’s mighty acts and

promises.

8. Representation and \_anticipation are expressed in thanksgiving and intercession. The

Church, gratefully recalling God’s mighty acts of redemption, beseeches God to give the

benefits of these acts to every human being. In thanksgiving and intercession, the Church

is united with the Son, its great High Priest and Intercessor (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). The

eucharist is the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ, who ever lives to make

intercession for us. It is the memorial of all that God has done for the salvation of the

world. What it was God’s will to accomplish in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection

and ascension of Christ, God does not repeat. These events are unique and can neither be

repeated nor prolonged. In the memorial of the eucharist, however, the Church offers its

intercession in communion with Christ, our great High Priest.

COMMENTARY (8)

*It is in the light of the significance of the eucharist as intercession that references to the eucharist in*

*Catholic theology as “propitiatory sacrifice” may be understood. The understanding is that there is*

*only one expiation, that of the unique sacrifice of the cross, made actual in the eucharist and*

*presented before the Father in the intercession of Christ and of the Church for all humanity.*

*In the light of the biblical conception of memorial, all churches might want to review the old*

*controversies about “sacrifice” and deepen their understanding of the reasons why other traditions*

*than their own have either used or rejected this term.*

9. The *anamnesis* of Christ is the basis and source of all Christian prayer. So our prayer

relies upon and is united with the continual intercession of the risen Lord. In the eucharist,

Christ empowers us to live with him, to suffer with him and to pray through him as

justified sinners, joyfully and freely fulfilling his will.

10. In Christ we offer ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice in our daily lives (Rom.

12:1; I Peter 2:5); this spiritual worship, acceptable to God, is nourished in the eucharist,

in which we are sanctified and reconciled in love, in order to be servants of reconciliation

in the world.

11. United to our Lord and in communion with all the saints and martyrs, we are

renewed in the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ.

12. Since the *anamnesis* of Christ is the very content of the preached Word as it is of the

eucharistic meal, each reinforces the other. The celebration of the eucharist properly

includes the proclamation of the Word.

13. The words and acts of Christ at the institution of the eucharist stand at the heart of

the celebration; the eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the

sacrament of his real presence. Christ fulfills in a variety of ways his promise to be always

with his own even to the end of the world. But Christ’s mode of presence in the eucharist

is unique. Jesus said over the bread and wine of the eucharist: “This is my body ... this is

my blood ...” What Christ declared is true, and this truth is fulfilled every time the

eucharist is celebrated. The Church confesses Christ’s real, living and active presence in

the eucharist. While Christ’s real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of

the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required.

COMMENTARY (13)

*Many churches believe that by the words of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread*

*and wine of the eucharist become, in a real though mysterious manner, the body and blood of the*

*risen Christ, i.e., of the living Christ present in all his fullness. Under the signs of bread and wine,*

*the deepest reality is the total being of Christ who comes to us in order to feed us and transform ourentire being. Some other churches, while affirming a real presence of Christ at the eucharist, do notlink that presence so definitely with the signs of bread and wine. The decision remains for the churches whether this difference can be accommodated within the convergence formulated in the textitself*

*C. The Eucharist as Invocation of the Spirit*

14. The Spirit makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic

meal, fulfilling the promise contained in the words of institution. The presence of Christ is

clearly the centre of the eucharist, and the promise contained in the words of institution is

therefore fundamental to the celebration. Yet it is the Father who is the primary origin and

final fulfilment of the eucharistic event. The incarnate Son of God by and in whom it is

accomplished is its living centre. The Holy Spirit is the immeasurable strength of love

which makes it possible and continues to make it effective. The bond between the

eucharistic celebration and the mystery of the Triune God reveals the role of the Holy

Spirit as that of the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive. Being

assured by Jesus’ promise in the words of institution that it will be answered, the Church

prays to the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that the eucharistic event may be

a reality: the real presence of the crucified and risen Christ giving his life for all humanity.

COMMENTARY (14)

*This is not to spiritualize the eucharistic presence of Christ but to affirm the indissoluble union*

*between the Son and the Spirit. This union makes it clear that the eucharist is not a magical or*

*mechanical action but a prayer addressed to the Father, one which emphasizes the Church’s utterdependence. There is an intrinsic relationship between the words of institution, Christ’s promise,and the* epiklesis*, the in-vocation of the Spirit, in the liturgy. The* epiklesis *in relation to the words of institution is located differently in various liturgical traditions. In the early liturgies the whole “prayer action” was thought of as bringing about the reality promised by Christ. The*

*invocation of the Spirit was made both on the community and on the elements of bread and wine.*

*Recovery of such an understanding may help us over-come our difficulties concerning a special*

*moment of consecration.*

15. It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that

the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ’s body and blood. They remain

so for the purpose of communion.

COMMENTARY (15)

*In the history of the Church there have been various attempts to understand the mystery of the real and unique presence of Christ in the eucharist. Some are content merely to affirm this presence without seeking to explain it. Others consider it necessary to assert a change wrought by the Holy Spirit and Christ’s words, in consequence of which there is no longer just ordinary bread and wine but the body and blood of Christ. Others again have developed an explanation of the real presence which, though not claiming to exhaust the significance of the mystery, seeks to protect it from damaging interpretations.*

16. The whole action of the eucharist has an “epikletic” character because it depends

upon the work of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the liturgy, this aspect of the eucharist

finds varied expression.

17. The Church, as the community of the new covenant, confidently invokes the Spirit,

in order that it may be sanctified and renewed, led into all justice, truth and unity, and

empowered to fulfil its mission in the world.

18. The Holy Spirit through the eucharist gives a fore-taste of the Kingdom of God: the

Church receives the life of the new creation and the assurance of the Lord’s return.

*D. The Eucharist as Communion of the Faithful*

19. The eucharistic communion with Christ who nourishes the life of the Church is at

the same time communion within the body of Christ which is the Church. The sharing in

one bread and the common cup in a given place demonstrates and effects the oneness of

the sharers with Christ and with their fellow sharers in all times and places. It is in the

eucharist that the community of God’s people is fully manifested. Eucharistic celebrations

always have to do with the whole Church, and the whole Church is involved in each local

eucharistic celebration. In so far as a church claims to be a manifestation of the whole

Church, it will take care to order its own life in ways which take seriously the interests and

concerns of other churches.

COMMENTARY (19)

*Since the earliest days, baptism has been understood as the sacrament by which believers are*

*incorporated into the body of Christ and are endowed with the Holy Spirit. As long as the right of the baptized believers and their ministers to participate in and preside over eucharistic celebration in one church is called into question by those who preside over and are members of other eucharistic congregations, the catholicity of the eucharist is less manifest. There is discussion in many churches today about the inclusion of baptized children as communicants at the Lord’s Supper.*

20. The eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving

and offering on be-half of the whole world. The eucharistic celebration demands

reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one

family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in

social, economic and political life (Matt. 5:23f; I Cor. 10:16f; I Cor. 11:20—22; Gal. 3:28).

All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when

we share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the eucharist the all-renewing grace of

God penetrates and re-stores human personality and dignity. The eucharist involves the

believer in the central event of the world’s history. As participants in the eucharist,

therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing

restoration of the world’s situation and the human condition. The eucharist shows us that

our behaviour is inconsistent in face of the reconciling presence of God in human history:

we are placed under continual judgment by the persistence of unjust relationships of all

kinds in our society, the manifold divisions on account of human pride, material interest

and power politics and, above all, the obstinacy of unjustifiable confessional oppositions

within the body of Christ.

21. Solidarity in the eucharistic communion of the body of Christ and responsible care

of Christians for one another and the world find specific expression in the liturgies: in the

mutual forgiveness of sins; the sign of peace; intercession for all; the eating and drinking

together; the taking of the elements to the sick and those in prison or the celebration of

the eucharist with them. All these manifestations of love in the eucharist are directly

related to Christ’s own testimony as a servant, in whose servanthood Christians themselves

participate. As God in Christ has entered into the human situation, so eucharistic liturgy is

near to the concrete and particular situations of men and women. In the early Church the

ministry of deacons and deaconesses gave expression in a special way to this aspect of the

eucharist. The place of such ministry between the table and the needy properly testifies to

the re-deeming presence of Christ in the world.

*E. The Eucharist as Meal of the Kingdom*

22. The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the

final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it. Signs of this renewal are present in the

world wherever the grace of God is manifest and human beings work for justice, love and

peace. The eucharist is the feast at which the Church gives thanks to God for these signs

and joyfully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom in Christ (I Cor. 11:26;

Matt. 26:29).

23. The world, to which renewal is promised, is pre-sent in the whole eucharistic

celebration. The world is present in the thanksgiving to the Father, where the Church

speaks on behalf of the whole creation; in the memorial of Christ, where the Church,

united with its great High Priest and Intercessor, prays for the world; in the prayer for the

gift of the Holy Spirit, where the Church asks for sanctification and new creation.

24. Reconciled in the eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be

servants of reconciliation among men and women and witnesses of the joy of resurrection.

As Jesus went out to publicans and sinners and had table-fellowship with them during his

earthly ministry, so Christians are called in the eucharist to be in solidarity with the outcast

and to become signs of the love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now

gives himself in the eucharist.

25. The very celebration of the eucharist is an instance of the Church’s participation in

God’s mission to the world. This participation takes everyday form in the proclamation of

the Gospel, service of the neighbour, and faithful presence in the world.

26. As it is entirely the gift of God, the eucharist brings into the present age a new reality

which trans-forms Christians into the image of Christ and there-fore makes them his

effective witnesses. The eucharist is precious food for missionaries, bread and wine for

pilgrims on their apostolic journey. The eucharistic community is nourished and

strengthened for confessing by word and action the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for

the salvation of the world. As it becomes one people, sharing the meal of the one Lord,

the eucharistic assembly must be concerned for gathering also those who are at present

beyond its visible limits, because Christ invited to his feast all for whom he died. Insofar as

Christians cannot unite in full fellowship around the same table to eat the same loaf and

drink from the same cup, their missionary witness is weakened at both the individual and

the corporate evels.

III. THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

27. The eucharistic liturgy is essentially a single whole, consisting historically of the

following elements in varying sequence and of diverse importance:

− hymns of praise;

− act of repentance;

− declaration of pardon;

− proclamation of the Word of God, in various forms;

− confession of faith (creed);

− intercession for the whole Church and for the world;

− preparation of the bread and wine;

− thanksgiving to the Father for the marvels of creation, redemption and sanctification

(deriving from the Jewish tradition of the *berakah*);

− the words of Christ’s institution of the sacrament according to the New Testament

tradition;

− the *anamnesis* or memorial of the great acts of redemption, passion, death, resurrection,

ascension and Pentecost, which brought the Church into being;

− the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiklesis*) on the community, and the elements of

bread and wine (either before the words of institution or after the memorial, or both;

or some other reference to the Holy Spirit which adequately expresses the “epikletic”

character of the eucharist);

− consecration of the faithful to God;

− reference to the communion of saints;

− prayer for the return of the Lord and the definitive manifestation of his Kingdom;

− the Amen of the whole community;

− the Lord’s prayer;

− sign of reconciliation and peace;

− the breaking of the bread;

− eating and drinking in communion with Christ and with each member of the Church;

− final act of praise;

− blessing and sending.

28. The best way towards unity in eucharistic celebration and communion is the renewal

of the eucharist itself in the different churches in regard to teaching and liturgy. The

churches should test their liturgies in the light of the eucharistic agreement now in the

process of attainment.

The liturgical reform movement has brought the churches closer together in the manner of

celebrating the Lord’s Supper. However, a certain liturgical diversity compatible with our

common eucharistic faith is recognized as a healthy and enriching fact. The affirmation of

a common eucharistic faith does not imply uniformity in either liturgy or practice.

COMMENTARY (28)

*Since New Testament days, the Church has attached the greatest importance to the continued use of the elements of bread and wine which Jesus used at the Last Supper. In certain parts of the world, where bread and wine are not customary or obtainable, it is now sometimes held that local food and drink serve better to anchor the eucharist in every-day life. Further study is required concerning the question of which features of the Lord’s Supper were unchangeably instituted by Jesus, and which features remain within the Church’s competence to decide.*

29. In the celebration of the eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church.

It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. He is the shepherd who leads

the people of God, the prophet who announces the Word of God, the priest who

celebrates the mystery of God. In most churches, this presidency is signified by an

ordained minister. The one who presides at the eucharistic celebration in the name of

Christ makes clear that the rite is not the assemblies’ own creation or possession; the

eucharist is received as a gift from Christ living in his Church. The minister of the

eucharist is the ambassador who represents the divine initiative and expresses the

connection of the local community with other local communities in the universal Church.

30. Christian faith is deepened by the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Hence the

eucharist should be celebrated frequently. Many differences of theology, liturgy and

practice are connected with the varying frequency with which the Holy Communion is

celebrated.

31. As the eucharist celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate that it should

take place at least every Sunday. As it is the new sacramental meal of the people of God,

every Christian should be encouraged to receive communion frequently.

32. Some churches stress that Christ’s presence in the consecrated elements continues

after the celebration. Others place the main emphasis on the act of celebration itself and

on the consumption of the elements in the act of communion. The way in which the

elements are treated requires special attention. Regarding the practice of reserving the

elements, each church should respect the practices and piety of the others. Given the

diversity in practice among the churches and at the same time taking note of the present

situation in the convergence process, it is worthwhile to suggest:

− that, on the one hand, it be remembered, especially in sermons and instruction, that the

primary intention of reserving the elements is their distribution among the sick and

those who are absent, and

− on the other hand, it be recognized that the best way of showing respect for the

elements served in the eucharistic celebration is by their consumption, without

excluding their use for communion of the sick.

33. The increased mutual understanding expressed in the present statement may allow

some churches to attain a greater measure of eucharistic communion among themselves

and so bring closer the day when Christ’s divided people will be visibly reunited around

the Lord’s Table.