

COLUMNISTS

Catholics and Anglicans debate Eucharist

In September 1998 the Catholic bishops of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland released an important document on eucharistic sharing (also known as intercommunion) entitled, "One Bread One Body." The document was billed as a teaching document, directed mainly at Roman Catholics. It was also written with other Christians in mind, inviting them to study the document and respond to it.

Now, more than 2½ years later, the House of Bishops of the Church of England has done so, in a document entitled, "The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity." The new cardinal-archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, has welcomed the Anglican response as a necessary step in the ongoing efforts to resolve the churches' remaining disagreements over eucharistic doctrine and discipline.

When the Roman Catholic bishops' document first appeared, it was met with mixed reactions even among Catholics. The highly respected *Tablet of London* called it a step backward, pointing out that the bishops' new norms for intercommunion were actually more restrictive than those of a 1993 directory on ecumenism, as well as the guidelines laid down by Catholic bishops elsewhere.

Those earlier, more expansive documents allowed for eucharistic sharing in



essays in
theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

"exceptional cases," even on a regular basis. "One Bread One Body," on the other hand, restricted that possibility to a "unique occasion," such as persecution or imprisonment. It removed the power of discretion from parish priests and placed it solely in the hands of local bishops or their delegates — which meant delays of days or even weeks, when such decisions had to be made almost on the spot.

The Roman Catholic bishops insisted that, apart from "unique occasions," eucharistic sharing could only occur among those "who are in full communion with the Catholic Church, united with the bishop of [the] local community and with the Pope."

They made the further point that "only a validly ordained priest ... brings into being the sacrament of the Eucharist," and

declared that ordained ministers of Christian churches "rooted in the Reformation" cannot be regarded as validly ordained, clearly including the Church of England which vehemently rejects being characterized as "rooted in the Reformation."

By inference, the Roman Catholic bishops were stipulating that no Anglican priest, including the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, is validly ordained, much less validly consecrated into the episcopal order. At best, they are pious, but woefully misguided, lay people.

Some two years earlier Pope John Paul II had unwittingly encouraged such illusions when he invited the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Anglican bishops to don their episcopal vestments and process with him at a vesper service for the 1400th anniversary of the mission to Britain initiated by Pope Gregory the Great. On the same occasion, the pope gave Archbishop Carey an episcopal cross, thereby lending papal legitimacy to the charade.

And, then, at the beginning of the Jubilee Year 2000, John Paul II invited Archbishop Carey and a representative of the Orthodox Church to assist him in opening the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica. More encouragement for what used to be called "sacramental simulation."

As the general secretary of the Church

of England's Council for Christian Unity noted in a recent article in *The Tablet*, Anglicans do not dissent from the eucharistic theology of the Roman Catholic bishops' document, but only from the pastoral consequences drawn from it. Indeed, Anglicans have made their agreement with the doctrine so clearly and so often (especially with regard to the Real Presence and the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist) that they are "bound to wonder whether their considered statements are taken seriously by the Roman Catholic Church" (3/24/01).

Among the fundamental items at issue here is a difference in understanding the meaning and scope of catholicity, and, therefore, of the Body of Christ itself.

Why is it, the Anglican bishops ask, that intercommunion is encouraged with the Orthodox, who do not fulfill the requirements for full eucharistic sharing, but is prohibited with Anglicans on the grounds that the fullness of catholicity is lacking?

If Anglicans can say "Amen" with their Roman Catholic brethren at the end of the eucharistic prayer, why can't they communicate together as well? Why not, indeed? (More next week.)

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

Motherhood entails obligations, rewards, blessings

Mother's Day (May 13), Fifth Sunday of Easter. (R3) John 13:31-35; (R1) Acts 14:21-27; (R2) Revelation 21:1-5.

Motherhood is the longest running production of a woman's life. It's every day, seven days a week. Every day when the curtain goes up, she is there to support, to comfort, to listen. There is nothing sentimental or easy about being a mother. It involves joy and sorrow, labor and laughter, trials and decisions.

A mother's role is to love her children. Loving them won't solve all problems, but if she doesn't love them, nothing else will help. Sometimes it has to be tough love when discipline is needed. But it has to be present for years without end. If it is, it will be one of the strongest supports for children as they grow into adulthood.

A mother nurtures. She never misses an opportunity to show what it means to be a loving person. Her words, her attitudes, her judgments are powerful examples. She helps others by giving her time, her understanding, her love, her Christian faith to her children. But above all she listens, has an open mind and an open heart needed by both children and husband.

A mother accepts children as a gift of God, entrusted to mothers and fathers.



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

They take them as they are and help them grow into fully human persons.

A mother forgives. Children make mistakes. They need to be forgiven. They can be punished, but harboring resentment has no place in a mother's love.

The mother makes a home where everybody feels comfortable and welcomed. It is a place where children learn responsibility and where all share in work.

A mother teaches about God. Children have a natural sense of the reality of God. Mothers can awaken this sacred dimension. She can teach respect for the world, for all living things, and especially for traditional Christian values.

A mother teaches best by her example, by her own life of prayer and godliness. A spirit is caught quicker than taught.

Mothers are human, not perfect. Mothers need breathing space on a regular basis. They need support, love, prayers, appreciation. A father's involvement with his family is deeply important to the well-being of his wife and their children.

Though motherhood has many obligations, still it has wonderful rewards. There are everyday satisfactions: moments of fun, laughter, sharing, joy. To see youngsters develop their individuality and character as they grow to fulfillment gives great satisfaction. Then the eternal reward: A woman shall be saved through childbearing (1 Timothy 2:15).

Children are infinitely complex. So I suggest mothers say this prayer each day:

"Dear Lord, you know my inadequacies. You know my weaknesses not only in parenting but in every other area of my life. I do the best I can, but often it isn't good enough.

"As you broke the loaves and the fish to feed the five thousand, now take my meager efforts, and use them to bless my family. Make up for the things I do wrong. Satisfy the needs I have not satisfied. Wrap your great arms around my children and husband and then draw them close to you. And be there when they stand at the great crossroads between

right and wrong.

"All I can give is my best, and I am trying to do that. Therefore, I submit to you my children, my husband and myself, and the job I am doing as a mother. The outcome now belongs to you. Into your hands I commend my life."

God bless all mothers. Pray for your mother, living or dead.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, May 14

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; John 15:9-17

Tuesday, May 15

Acts 14:19-28; John 14:27-31A

Wednesday, May 16

Acts 15:1-6; John 15:1-8

Thursday, May 17

Acts 15:7-21; John 15:9-11

Friday, May 18

Acts 15:22-31; John 15:12-17

Saturday, May 19

Acts 16:1-10; John 15:18-21

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