

## **EXPLORING THE MASS: CONTEMPORARY QUESTIONS AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES**

*Kieran J. O'Mahony, OSA*

[www.tarsus.ie](http://www.tarsus.ie)

### **Presentation 1**

- **Welcome**
- **We have five presentations**
- **1. Kingdom of God**
- **2. The Last Supper**
- **3. Paul**
- **4. History**
- **5. Today**

### **Sequence**

- Short open forum
- Where to begin?
- The preaching and presentation of the Kingdom
- The path towards Jesus death

### **Where to begin**

- I had a good experience of the Eucharist when...
- In my opinion, the Eucharist is...
- What I would like to know about the Eucharist...

A few minutes to hear the feedback and hold on to it.

### **The right starting point**

- Not narrow issues which arose in history.
- Not points of disagreement between the churches.
- But the basic proclamation of the kingdom.
- And the lead-up to Jesus' own acceptance of his destiny.

### **The Kingdom of God**

- John the Baptizer came, proclaiming the coming of God's kingdom and messiah and calling the nation to repent.
- Shortly thereafter, Jesus appeared, announcing that the kingdom of God had come/was near.
- The kingdom of God was the central theme of Jesus' proclamation, particularly during his Galilean ministry.
- Scholars agree that Jesus used this image to refer to
  - God's heavenly and eternal rule,
  - God's rule on earth in the obedience of the faithful,
  - and God's future rule in the eschaton.
- Here the scholarly agreement ceases, though, as debate rages over which of these ideas best characterises the nature of the kingdom.
  - An additional question has been raised concerning the present rule of God:
  - Is it merely a spiritual rule in the hearts and minds of obedient faithful?
- Did Jesus intend to establish the reign of God in a more political or social way?
- What is clear is the importance of the kingdom of God to the message and ministry of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.
- Many of his parables are told in order to help his hearers grasp his concept of God's rule. They range in scope from stories which have their origin in peasant customs to stories of kings and landowners. They present the kingdom as a treasure beyond price, a magnificent banquet, or a wedding feast.

- Even the parables of Jesus which do not seem to have a surface connection to the kingdom address the need for proper behaviour and relationships in the light of the coming of God's kingdom.
- The suffering we now undergo is part of the general reality of evil.
- Even though we cannot see it now, God will in the future establish his rule (kingdom)
- We believe this, even though we cannot see it now, because God is faithful.
- Because we cannot see it now, we are called to steadfastness, i.e. faithful endurance
- Jesus was an apocalyptic Jew
- Kingdom = future faithfulness of God, incl. resurrection
  - Future kingdom (KG has draw near...)
  - Present kingdom (KG is among you...)
  - Kingdom and his destiny (...new in my father's Kingdom...)

Now after John was imprisoned, Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospel of God. He said, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!" (Mark 1:14–15)

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20–21)

While they were eating, he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it. This is my body." And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many. I tell you the truth, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:22–26)

- Jesus announced the Kingdom of God
- He explored it in his parables
- He gave people an experience of it in his healings and inclusivity
- Especially, the open table-fellowship is central to his message and his destiny
- The person of Jesus: Good News (eu-aggelion);
- Kingdom coming and metanoia is the fitting preparation.
- God's Yes, as Paul puts it;
- Ways of making the message real
- forgiveness, healing, teaching, disputes
- open table-fellowship especially
- Vision: acceptance, new vision, new life.

#### **And so...**

- Kingdom of God: faithfulness, compassion, forgiveness
- Kingdom of God: metanoia
- Kingdom of God: inclusivity, acceptance, communion

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- What happened?
- Multiple contexts
- Jesus faced death
- The Last Supper
- And today?

**What happened: Date**

- Last Supper in Matthew, Mark and Luke
- Last Supper in John
- Arguments for and against the two calendars

**What happened: Meal practices**

DEIPNON (the dinner proper)

Numbers of guests should be “no fewer than the graces” (3) and “no more than the muses” (9). Usually men only.

SYMPOSIUM (“drinking together”)

Time for chat, news, argument, perhaps entertainment.

**What happened: Words**

- Reported four times (not in John)
- Matthew and Mark
- Luke and Paul
- All show signs of
- Worship practice and
- Theological development

Matthew	Mark	Luke	Paul
Matt 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take, eat, this is my body.” 27 And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.	Mark 14:22 While they were eating, he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take it. This is my body.” 23 And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 He said to them, “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many.”	Luke 22:19 Then he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 20 And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”	1 Cor 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, 24 and after he had given thanks he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

**Reconstruction by Meier**

He took bread, and giving thanks [or: pronouncing a blessing],  
broke [it] and said:  
“this is my body”.

Likewise also the cup,

after supper, saying,  
“This cup is the covenant in my blood”.

**What did it mean?**

- Calls for careful reconstruction
- Difficult to establish how Jesus himself understood his death and there are gaps in our understanding
- In general, John’s gospel cannot be used

**Multiple contexts (1)**

- The Kingdom of God (previous presentation)
- The shock of Jesus words and actions
- The dietary and purity laws

**Multiple contexts (2)**

- Prophetic gestures in the OT
- Prophetic gestures in Jesus’ ministry
- Open table fellowship as prophetic gesture

Mark 1 (Ex 23:20 + Mal 3:1; Is 40:3; Is 40:1-11)

Mark 9:12 (= Is 53:3) Despised

Mark 14:24 (= Is 53:11ff.) For many

Mark 10:34 (= Is 50:6) Spit

Mark 10:45 (Is 53:10ff) Ransom

Mark 14:49, 61 (= Is 53:7) Silent

Mark 15:27 (= Is 53:12) With outlaws

**Multiple contexts (3)**

- Passover context
- Paul: Christ our paschal lamb
- John: Behold the Lamb of God

**Multiple contexts (4)**

- Pharisees: much in common, except the authority and acceptance of sinners
- Temple authorities: several visits to Jerusalem: Temple precincts
- Sadducees: problem with forgiveness
- Romans: another kingdom; solidarity with the poor; rebels and taxes

**Jesus faced death (1)**

- Before the Supper
- Events: Death of John the Baptist
- Words: Serve, Jerusalem, Suffering Servant, Passion Prediction, New Wine
- Parables: Vineyard
- Actions: Entry, Temple Actions

**Jesus faced death (2)**

- After the Supper
- Gethsemane: Abba, father
- The last words of Jesus
- Eli, atta, or Elia, tha!
- “My God, it is you!”

**Jesus faced death (3)**

- Jesus died in faithfulness
- His proclamation of the Kingdom included faith in the resurrection
- He understood his death to be part of the coming of the Kingdom

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed— 22 namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 24 But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 25 God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. 26 This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness.

**The Last Supper**

He took bread, and giving thanks [or: pronouncing a blessing], broke [it] and said:  
“this is my body”.

Likewise also the cup,  
after supper, saying,  
“This cup is the covenant in my blood”.

- Interpretation: by prophetic gesture and meaning
- Contexts: Kingdom, Prophetic Gestures and open table fellowship, Passover
- Death: Events, words, parables, actions
- Service: Jesus gave himself in faithfulness to his Abba and his calling
- Romans 3:19-26
- John 13:1-17
- Hebrews 2:11-18; 4:14-16
- Ephesians 2:11-22

**And today?**

- Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
- Imperative of inclusion
- Jesus' own faith as the heart of it
- Communion in him commits those who take part to the vision of the Kingdom and its values

**Reading**

Morna Hooker, *The Signs of a Prophet*

Pierre Simson, *Do This in Memory of Me*

José Pagola, *Jesus. An Historical Approximation*

Kieran J. O'Mahony *The Last Supper: What happened and what did it mean?*

Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreed Statement on the Eucharist  
Agreed Statement (1979)

[http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e\\_arcic\\_eucharist.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_eucharist.html)

Elucidation (1979)

[http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e\\_arcic\\_elucid\\_euch.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_elucid_euch.html)

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### Presentation 3

#### Sequence

- The social context
- Greco-Roman dinners
- The Lord's Supper
- Message for today

#### Greco-Roman Dinners

- DEIPNON (the dinner proper)
- Numbers of guests should be “no fewer than the graces” (3) and “no more than the muses” (9). Usually men only.
- SYMPOSIUM (“drinking together”)
- Time for chat, news, argument, perhaps entertainment.

I happened to be dining with a man, though no particular friend of his, whose elegant economy, as he called it, seemed to me a sort of stingy extravagance.

The best dishes were set in front of himself and a select few, and the cheap scraps of food before the rest of the company. He had even put the wine into tiny little flasks, divided into three categories, not with the idea of giving his guests the opportunity of choosing, but to make it impossible for them to refuse what they were given. One lot was intended for himself and for us, another for his lesser friends (all his friends are graded), and the third for his and our freedmen. (Pliny, Letters 2:6)

#### The Lord's Supper

A. 17-22 Abuse: feeding yourself

11:17 ¶ Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. 19 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. 20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. 22 What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

B. 23-26 Tradition

1Cor. 11:23 ¶ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	Paul
Matt 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said,	Mark 14:22 While they were eating, he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take it. This is my	Luke 22:19 Then he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for	1 Cor 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took

<p>“Take, eat, this is my body.” 27 And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.</p>	<p>body.” 23 And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 He said to them, “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many.”</p>	<p>you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 20 And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”</p>	<p>bread, 24 and after he had given thanks he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of me.”</p>
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### Reconstruction by Meier

He took bread, and giving thanks [or: pronouncing a blessing], broke [it] and said:  
 “this is my body”.

Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying,  
 “This cup is the covenant in my blood”.

- (1) This is my body = Semitic imagery in heightened form. Questions of real presence etc. and sacramental theology can hardly be answered as they have not been asked.
- (2) Body - meaning what? The first layer of reference is probably simply to the crucifixion - his literal body was to be broken.
- (3) For you - unique to Paul-Luke, meaning what? If this is a reference to Is 53:12 (bore the sin of many). Thus for Jesus himself this is almost certainly a prophetic symbolic action, by which he anticipated his death and interpreted it in the light of scripture.
- (4) For you = on our behalf/ in our place - depending on what kind of atonement theology is sought.

### B’ 27-32 Discerning the body

1Cor. 11:27 ¶ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

### A’ 33-34 Mutual hospitality

1Cor. 11:33 ¶ So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

### Message for today

- Community dimension of the Eucharist
- Breaking down societal barriers as gospel
- Recognising the people to whom I belong
- When this is missing, what is the Eucharist?
- Cannot receive the Lord in the bread and wine and ignore him your neighbour
- Exactly consistent with Jesus’ own teaching

**Deus Caritas est §14**

Faith, worship and ethos are interwoven as a single reality which takes shape in our encounter with God's agape. Here the usual contraposition between worship and ethics simply falls apart.

"Worship" itself, Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn.

A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.

**And so...**

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### **Presentation 4**

#### **Sequence**

- Byzantium (sanctuaries and altar rails)
- Middle Ages (dramatic performance)
- Real Presence (theology / legends)
- Atonement, sacrifice, purgatory, indulgences...Anselm of Canterbury
  
- Reformation challenges

#### **Byzantium**

- Altar rails (cf. Avdat)
- Sanctuaries
- Vestments
- Court ceremonial

#### **The Middle Ages**

- Mass as allegory or symbolic drama
- Extra-liturgical devotions (and superstitions)
- Bread and wine + transubstantiation
- "Sacrificing priests" + "Chantry priests"
- Private devotions added - and still today.
  
- How far are we from the New Testament?

#### **The Reformation**

- Crisis over faith v. works
- Specifically: merit, indulgences, the Mass
- Priest as sacrifices who "re-enacts"
  
- Luther was the most conservative: consubstantiation.
  
- Zwingli most radical - still with us
  
- The Mass as a repetition of Calvary
- The Real Presence taken literally

#### **The Augsburg Confession**

Article X: Of the Lord's Supper.

Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat the Supper of the Lord; and they reject those that teach otherwise.

#### **The Consensus of Zurich**

Article 22. Explanation of the Words "This Is My Body."

Those who insist that the formal words of the Supper, "This is my body; this is my blood," are to be taken in what they call the precisely literal sense, we repudiate as preposterous interpreters. For we hold it out of controversy that they are to be taken figuratively, the bread and wine receiving the name of that which they signify. Nor should it be thought a new or unwonted thing to transfer the name of things figured by metonymy [modern spelling: metonymy] to the sign, as similar modes of expression occur throughout the Scriptures, and we by so saying assert nothing but what is found in the most ancient and most approved writers of the Church.

#### Article 9. The Signs and the Things Signified Not Disjoined but Distinct.

Wherefore, though we distinguish, as we ought, between the signs and the things signified, yet we do not disjoin the reality from the signs, but acknowledge that all who in faith embrace the promises there offered receive Christ spiritually, with his spiritual gifts, while those who had long been made partakers of Christ continue and renew that communion.

#### **The Thirty-Nine Articles**

##### 28. Of the Lord's Supper.

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

##### 28. Of the Lord's Supper.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

#### **The Council of Trent**

Better balance of faith/works, grace/merit, divine/human co-operation  
Asserting the doctrine of the Eucharist "aptly" called transubstantiation.

#### CHAPTER IV. On Transubstantiation.

And because that Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which He offered under the species of bread to be truly His own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that, by the consecration of the bread and of the wine, a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood; which conversion is, by the holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation.

- Transubstantiation
- What is meant by "substance"
- *Substantia* in Latin
- *Ousia* in Greek
- Form and Substance / Appearances and reality

#### **Ecumenical Agreements**

- Vatican II: *Unitatis Redintegratio*
- *Ut unum sint* (1995)
- *Dominus Iesus* (2000)
- Role of Pope Francis
- Anglican Communion: Eucharist (1971 and 1979)
- Lutheran Federation: Eucharist (1979); Justification by faith (1999)
- Orthodox Church: Eucharist (1982)

[http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/e\\_dialogues.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/e_dialogues.html)

<http://www.ecumenism.net/docu/dialogue.htm>

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en>

#### **More Recent Efforts**

- The proclamation of the Kingdom (Mk 1)
- Open table-fellowship as prophetic gesture (Lk 14)

- The Last Supper as prophetic gesture (Mk 14)
- The context of the Passover
- Creation (sabbath)
- Liberation (Exodus)
- Communion / community (1 Corinthians 11)
- Social consequences (John 6 and 13)
  
- The importance of “personalist” categories
- The Mystery of Self-Presentation
- The Constant Real Presence
- Symbol not Sign
- New Theology of Memorial
- Eucharistic Agreements
  
- Transfinalisation / Transsignification
- The “human” reality of bread
- The Convergence of Meanings in the Eucharist (see previous and next slide)
- The Disclosure and Articulation of Self
- The Disclosure and Articulation of our identities

Creator  
(Father)

Redeemer  
(Jesus)

Life-giver  
(Spirit)

Love

**EUCCHARIST**

Belonging

Hope  
World

Service  
Community

Courage  
Spirituality

**Where are we now?**

**Conversation**

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- Babette's Feast
- The Variety of Names
- The Eucharistic Prayers
- What is a Eucharistic Prayer?
- Eucharist Today
- Basic Human Questions
- Eucharistic Hospitality
- Your own issues . . .

**Babette's Feast**

- Story: Martine and Philippa (= Philip Melancthon and Martin Luther)
- Author: Karen Blixen
- Film: Gabriel Axel
- Context: Hundredth anniversary / autobiographically

**The Eucharistic Prayer**

- Roman Canon
- Book of Common Prayer
  
- Didache
- Hypollytus
  
- Roman EP II
- Anglican EP I
- Cofl Prayer 2

## Opening Dialogue

Preface [to do with the feast]

Sanctus

Salvation History Commemorated

Invocation of the Holy Spirit [epiclesis]

Narrative of Institution

Prayer of Commemoration and Offering [anamnesis]

Invocation of the Holy Spirit [epiclesis]

Intercession

**The Eucharist Today**

- The Table of the Faith
  
- Spirituality
- Belonging
- Integration
- Mission
  
- (a) Thanksgiving and Praise
  - Creation and Redemption
- (b) Memorial of Jesus' Death and Resurrection
  - Christian Passover
- (c) Communion of all who take part
  - the Body of Christ

- (d) Mission  
- to be what we celebrate

**Eucharistic Hospitality**

- The Orthodox Church
- The Anglican Communion
- The Lutheran Federation
- The Porvoo Agreement
- The Catholic Church

**Reading**

- Tom O'Loughlin, *The Eucharist: Origins and Contemporary Understandings*
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNSMbOCKoMY>

**And so...**