127 Eucharist (*Eucaristia*)

The Eucharist is said to be a great sacrament both by reason of the subject and by reason of the effect. As far as the subject it contains the author himself of salvation and grace. As far as the effects, note that its principal effect is to confer virtues. A secondary effect is to mitigate incentives to sin. The excellence of this sacrament is evident in many things, because before the law, under the law, and after the law. Before the law it was prefigured by the patriarchs. Under the law it was designated through Moses. After the law it was announced in advance by the prophets, instituted by Christ, observed by the apostles and their followers, solemnized by the highest pontiffs.

¶ Concerning the first,[[1]](#endnote-1) this sacrament is figured in the offering of bread and wine which Melchisedech offered to the patriarch Abraham, Gen. 14[:18].

¶ Again, it is figured in the morsel of bread which Abraham served up before the angels who appeared to him, Gen. 18[:4-5], to whom he said, “Wash your feet, and rest under the tree. And I will set a morsel of bread, and afterwards you shall pass on.”

Where it is noted, first, the cleansing of affection when it is said, Wash your feet. My feet, my love, says Augustine, *Super Psalmos*.[[2]](#endnote-2) And Isai. 1[:16]: “Wash yourselves, be clean,” etc.

Second, the halting of temptation is noted when it is said, Rest, one under an infirmity after a fever does not immediately eat, but rests and afterwards eats, Isai. 1[:16, 19]: “Cease to do perversely,” and it follows, “If you are willing, and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land.”

Third, the offering of Holy Communion is noted when it is said, I will set a morsel of bread, this is “that bread that may strengthen man's heart” in Psal. [103:15]. Judges 19[:21]: “After they had washed their feet, he entertained them with a feast.” These three Christ taught because he “washed the feet of the disciples,” John 13[:5]. He also said to them, “Sleep now and take your rest,” Matt. 26[:45]. Again [26:26]: “Take, and eat.” Again that sacrament is figured by the feast which Abraham made in the day of the weaning of his son, his Isaac, Gen. 21[:8]. Because the father of heaven after the taking away from the milk of desire admits man to the feast of the Eucharist and not before. Wherefore also concerning the weaning of Ishmael is not read because he was rejected. Again, Joseph did not admit his brothers to his table until they would be reconciled at the table, Gen. 43[:25].

Again,[[3]](#endnote-3) [Deut. 8:3] this sacrament was figured under the law by the manna which God rained on the ancient fathers after the transit through the Red Sea going across toward the promised land, so our manna, that is, the body of Christ, is given after baptism to us traveling toward heaven. Wherefore also the Eucharist is called viaticum because it restores travelers.

¶ Again,[[4]](#endnote-4) under the law it was figured in the paschal lamb by which is designated the freedom from the Egyptian servitude, Exod. 12[:3].

¶ Again, among the prophets it was said in the Psal. [77:25]: “Man ate the bread of angels.”

Again, it was instituted by Christ as a sacrament when he said, Matt. [26:26]: “Take, and eat. This is my body.” It was observed by the apostles, 1 Cor. 11[:20]: “When you come therefore together into one place, it is not now to eat the Lord's supper.”

Again, it was solemnized by the highest pontiffs who as a decoration of this sacrament ordained the boundary of the place, and the ornaments of time.

¶ Again, concerning this sacrament note that Isaac in testing the food administered to him failed according to every sense except hearing [Gen. 25:26], so our senses fail in this sacrament except hearing. For we hold only by faith there is the true body of Christ. However faith listened clearly, according to the Apostle, Rom. 10[:17]. Wherefore in figure of this matter a tree was shown, Dan. 4[:8], to king Nabugodonosor through a dream which reached up to heaven, whose fruit was very much, and it was food for all in it, because only through faith which is vigilant and as if through a dream do we know the virtue of the cross of Christ and the fruit proceeding from it and how the food of the Eucharist is from it.

¶ Concerning the Eucharist Augustine says in the book *Ecclesiasticis dogmatibus* c. 05,[[5]](#endnote-5) receive the Eucharist daily neither with praise nor vituperation. However I encourage taking communion every Sunday. If however the mind is not in the way of sinning. Again note that in his sacrament many things are to be admired. However, when it is entirely to be believed as namely that the true body of Christ is there in his true quantity and in so much as he was on the cross and just as now in heaven. Neither does the cause exceed the limits of that form but his clarity is not vitiated there. Again his accidents are there having substance, however the effect in color, on the teeth, form, taste when they can satisfy also in color, intoxicate not only nourish according to some teachers because it is only the substance which nourishes.

¶ Again when the host is divided, the division takes place in the accidents and not in the body. Rather the whole is Christ in whatever particle and man can communicate in the particle, just as in the whole. The example concerning the mirror, the speech of man, the unity is in the one bringing forth, and however the whole and just as much is heard by many.

1. Cf. Hugh Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium Theologicae Veritatis* 6.12 (8:210a-b): Sacramentum corporis Christi praefiguratum est multipliciter, scilicet 1. in oblatione Melchisedech, in qua figurate habemus formam exteriorem sacramenti, et primum effectum, scilicet refectionem.... [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 9:16 (PL 36:124): Pes animae recte intelligitur amor: qui cum pravus est, vocatur cupiditas aut libido; cum autem rectus, dilectio vel charitas. Amore enim movetur tanquam ad locum quo tendit.

Cf. Sheila Delaney, *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England: The work of Osbern Bokenham* (Oxford: University Press, 1998), p. 92. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Hugh Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium Theologicae Veritatis* 6.12 (8:210b): 2. Item in manna, ubi figurabatur effectus gratiae. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Hugh Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium Theologicae Veritatis* 6.12 (8:210b): 3. Item in agno paschali, in wuo figurabatur liberatio a servitute aegyptiaca: ita noster agnus est signum liberationis a diabolo [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Augustine, *De Ecclesiasticis dogmatibus* 23 (PL 42:1217): Quotidie Eucharistiae communionem percipere nec laudo nec vitupero. Omnibus tamen dominicis diebus communicandum suadeo et hortor, si tamen mens in affectu peccandi non sit.

Cf. Decretum, De consec., D. 2, c. 13. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)