

How can we make catechesis a soul-touching and life enhancing formation of the Christians? How would we make the liturgical celebrations as the experiences of faith learning and deepening of the message of Jesus? Both liturgy and catechesis have their shared and complementary roles for living and forming in the Christian faith. In the practice of the early Church we find an inseparable order of liturgy and catechesis. The first Christians grew in the faith and in the Christian witness as a result of the formation given through the instruction and celebration of Christian mysteries. Down through the centuries, the Church informed, formed and transformed the Christian faithful through her liturgical celebrations and ministry of catechesis. In the sacred milieu of liturgy, the believers are under the direct guidance and teaching of the persons of the Holy Trinity. In the revered ambience of catechesis, the Church describes and discusses her fundamental faith and moral values. God and man work together in liturgy and catechesis for the salvation of the individual and the world. The author brings here a study on the possibility of liturgical catechesis in the context of creative and dynamic Eucharistic celebration.

EUCARISTIC CATECHESIS

Anto Amarnad

INTRODUCTION

Recently I received an e-mail message entitled: *Why Go To Church?* The evocative reflection that followed the title portrays the true significance of Eucharistic celebration in our Christian life. It was all about a church-goer who wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all." This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this... They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!" Religion and the aspects of faith, rituals and prayer proved today as the powerful ingredients for a healthy human existence. Modern man believes that his immune system is continually eavesdropping by the internal dialogue which he makes through his faith life.¹ The new science of psycho-neuro-immunology looks at the relationship between mind and body in a greater correlation and finds that the religion with its prayers and rituals have their positive impact on

immune and cardio-vascular systems.² Not only the food, but also the faith-celebrations really make us balanced and healthy. Faith is as important to the mind as the food most vital to the body. A perfect human life is possible only when the mind and body both grow in collaboration with each other. In the sacred celebration of the Eucharist we find this collaboration. Both the mind and body of every Christian are nourished immeasurably in a unique way through the Eucharistic celebration. In the Eucharist, our faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible! Our body is healed, strengthened and sanctified by the communion with the divine. Thank God for our physical and spiritual nourishment in the Eucharistic celebrations!

INVISIBLE, INCREDIBLE GIFTS OF THE EUCHARIST

Eucharist is not simply a sermon and a ritual meal but it is above all a divine-human communion and communication. This communion and communication enable us to be informed, formed and transformed. In the Old Testament times, we see the priests and prophets who were chosen for ascending and descending mediations. The priests took the prayers and aspirations of people to God's presence through the rituals and sacrifices. The prophets, as the descending mediators, on the other hand, intimated God's will and disclosed His message through prophecy, instruction and prediction. The holy Eucharist in the New Testament combines both these mediations in a healthy manner and provides the Church the fruits of religious experience. God, through the mediation of His Son and the Church, makes available for the believers the immense gratuitous gifts and hidden graces that make them the true living witnesses of His love. Eucharist is the heavenly food for our immortality and priceless medicine for healing our human wounds and sicknesses which are caused by our finite order. In the Eucharist, we are being united to the very source and origin of our life -- God Himself, through His only beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Again, the Eucharist could be understood as the pre-taste of the communion and beatific vision which we all are eagerly waiting at the end of our earthly existence. It is truly our spiritual and physical food, readily available in the form of Word, Bread and Wine. Through these elements, we become heirs of God's powerful and recreating Word, Christ's sacred Body and precious Blood. Thus, in the Eucharist we inherit the true fountain of our new life and the nourishments for our eternal existence. The celebration of the Eucharist leads us ultimately to our heavenly home to dwell everlasting with God. The Eucharist unites us with the divine in a visible and mysterious way and it works for our true redemption.

The Eucharist could be also viewed like a 'Tower of Liberty' that stands always to transmit the rays of guidance, salvation and well-being for the whole Christian family upon this beautiful planet. It is the supreme action and intention of the Son of God who decided to become again and again alive and available in each one of us and in our society by gathering us together for the remembrance of Him through his Word and Sacraments. Until the end of this world, the Eucharist will continue to remain as the

repeated commemoration and worship of the Church because the Christian life needs for its sustenance and growth, the effective and eternal presence of Christ. Christ is with us because the Eucharist is with us! And, the Eucharist will continue to be the redemptive sacrifice, remembrance and thanks-giving-meal for the life and enlightenment of the whole Church. Every Eucharistic celebration points to man's highest horizon of growth and accomplishment. Jesus, as the representative of all human beings, reached the highest stage of perfection. The Eucharist is the wonderful symbol of his perfection. Therefore, the Eucharist will also stand for man's highest evolution and top target in the process of his becoming. Jesus, through his Eucharist, has become the fully human and fully divine person and he invites his followers to reach the peak of perfection through a life of Eucharist. Thus, knowing the Eucharistic Lord is becoming a Eucharistic person and becoming a Eucharistic person is to be a fully human and fully divine person.

It is a matter of great wonder to ponder about the faith of thousands of Catholics who used to gather for the celebrations of the Holy Mass in our churches. With the same antique and repeated sacramental signs, symbols and with almost the same prayers and gestures, the holy Mass is joyfully welcomed and loved intensely by the Catholics! They truly find the Eucharist not as a simple and ordinary ritual of worship to God but as a basic component of their own religious life and God experience. It is received as an essential medium for communicating with God, with the society and with their own selves. As Catholic Christians, the Eucharistic celebration helps them bring in ever new meaning for their life and sets continually a fresh and wider scope for witnessing their faith. In the Eucharist God is still speaking to the people; Christ is still proclaiming his Good News and repeat the sacrifice of the cross and takes his new life in every Christian faithful who reply to God and Christ through the help of the Holy Spirit by the change of their heart, songs and prayers. Eucharist provides the most important moments of spiritual growth and avail abundant opportunities for instruction in faith.

ANCIENT AND MODERN NOTION OF CATECHESIS

Catechesis is understood in the Church as an instruction or formation given to the Christians to deepen their faith and assist in practising it and give them a Christian identity. At the centre of all catechesis there is a mystery disclosed – the sublime mystery of Jesus Christ. In this sense catechesis is providing us the Son of God – Jesus our Saviour. Eucharistic liturgy in the Church is not an ordinary public ritual act but a significant graceful act that sacramentally brings Jesus Christ and his paschal mystery alive through symbolic performance. Therefore the aim of catechesis and Eucharist could be seen as one and the same—make available Jesus the Saviour. The ministry of catechesis serves the sacred liturgy to achieve its goal of meeting Christ and imitating him in the daily life. The sacred liturgy and Catechesis are fundamentally supporting each other and helping Christians to interiorize the notions of faith and make them real followers of Christ. Thus, the role of the sacrament of Eucharist and the

ministry of Catechesis is to show us how to improve our attitudes towards the aspects of faith and to deepen our commitment in loving and living the demands of the Christian faith. Faith begins by the grace of God and it helps a believer to know Christ. This knowledge of Christ reaches its peak by becoming the known. Liturgy and catechesis assist each other in this progressive evolution. Catechesis enables the Christian faithful to *know* Christ and the liturgy shapes them to become Christ-like. In a nutshell, the Eucharistic catechesis speaks to us all about the formation given to the Christian faithful to *know* and to *become* the faith in Jesus Christ, which is an authentic way to accomplish salvation and receive the eternal life.

From a historical point of view, catechesis refers to the ministry of the Church in helping individuals and communities to deepen the Christian faith and give a Christian identity. Catechesis was in use to mean, first of all, for the Initiation Rites - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist; secondly, to show the further Instructions for the believers; and thirdly for all the activities meant for forming a Christian conscience. The word 'catechesis' is derived from the Greek word *κατέχειν* (*Katέchεin*). This term was seldom used in the profane and secular literature, but when it was used it always meant to show the instruction given orally, or to teach someone by the word of mouth, or to point the fact of speaking of someone so as to be heard, etc. And wherever this word is used in the New Testament, it refers to the oral instruction.³ Etymologically speaking, 'catechization' means the 'oral instruction' or 'oral teaching.' In ecclesiastical usage, the word *κατέχειν* was used to designate the religious instruction and more specifically that instruction which was given to the beginners in the Christian faith. Later in the use of the early Church, the word catechesis was not restricted to the act of instructing the beginners, but the same word was also used to mean the correlated activities like Evangelization, Instruction, Prophecy, Testimony and Exhortation. During the Apostolic and Patristic periods, the ministry of catechesis gained a precise nature of teaching someone on the fundamentals of Christian faith. Among these expressions however, it is possible to perceive a basic distinction: the first moment of proclamation of the message of Christ (with the verbs: to utter, to proclaim, to preach, to evangelize, to render testimony) and a second moment of explicating and deepening in which we find the significance of catechesis (with the verbs: to instruct, to converse, to handover, to deliver, to deposit).

The fact that oral instruction was the ordinary means of knowledge about Christ made the term *catechesis* to mean either the act of teaching or the message taught in the Church tradition. In passing through the Christian tradition and usage, the term 'catechesis' slowly came to mean 'the message of God which resounds downwards in the direction of men.' When the faith-school or Christian-training called Catechumenate and its functions disappeared in the fifth and sixth centuries, eventually the use of the word catechesis moved out and there was the emergence of another word "catechism" to mean the

similar ministry in the Church. But, in the nineteenth century, with the help of several renewal movements, the Church again tried to re-establish the same word catechesis with all its richness and significance as it was found in the ancient Church.

In the course of history, we find that the Church functioned and grew in the mission of Jesus by realizing his own roles as Prophet, Priest, and King. According to these roles of Jesus we find three ministries attached in the Church: Ministry of the Word, Ministry of Worship, and Ministry of service. Catechesis belongs to one of the forms of the ministry of the Word which assists the Church to instruct about the faith, to deepen and mature the faith and to give an identity to the Christian believers. *Dei Verbum* explains that the ministry of the Word contains of pastoral preaching, catechesis and all forms of Christian instruction, and liturgical homily.⁴ The *General Catechetical Directory* defines catechesis as that form of the Ministry of the Word which is intended to make man's faith more living, conscious and active through the light of instruction.⁵ According to the US National Catechetical Directory, "Within the scope of pastoral activity, catechesis is the term to be used for that form of ecclesial action which leads both communities and individual members of the faithful to the maturity of faith. The ministry of God's word is present in evangelization, catechesis, liturgy and theology."⁶ Today, the name catechesis is attributed to "The whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that by believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ" (*Catechesi Tradendae*,1).

Liturgical Catechesis and Faith Development in the Church

In the practice of the early Church we find an inseparable order of liturgy and catechesis. The first Christians grew in the faith and committed Christian witness as a result of the formation given through the instruction and celebration of Christian mysteries. The liturgical catechesis in the early times presupposed a process of conversion realized by the sharing of faith through the instruction on the basic Christian doctrine and the formation in moral behaviour according to the ideals set for the community of believers. Faith, Instruction, liturgy, Word of God, and Witness remained the most important components in the early Christian life. The Sacraments and their celebrations always absorbed the Word of God and it was also used for the purpose of deepening the Christian faith. Thus, we find a combination of liturgy and catechesis that had to become the most acceptable methodology for intensifying the commitment to Christ and for generating the faith in the early times. The neophytes were given a strictly liturgical catechesis in the form of *mystagogy* (mystery of Christ). We find such illustrations with Ambrose of Milan's *On Mysteries and on Sacraments*⁷ and Cyril of Jerusalem's *Mystagogical Catechesis*.⁸ During the periods of catechumenate, the climax point of the catechetical formation in the early Church reached in the Easter celebration of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. All these sacramental celebrations

were interconnected and in fact promoted the followers of the Christian-way a spirituality of love which is the core experience of the reign of God in the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Liturgy is a sacred action surpassing all other activities in the Church and it is in fact "The summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows."⁹ In *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of Second Vatican Council we get a graphic definition of Liturgy: *The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In its full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, the Head and his members.*¹⁰ In this description we find the significance and the centrality of liturgy in the life of the Church. Through the ministry of Word and ministry of Worship the Church accomplishes her highest realizations and make God's self gift in Jesus Christ more fruitful and realistic in the world. In the context of liturgy and catechesis, the Church considers that the liturgy has the privileged place for catechizing because it is in liturgy she draws her power and relates every believer to God and to each other. Intrinsically, catechesis is linked with liturgical and sacramental activity. In the ambience of liturgical celebrations the Church finds the most suitable moments of growth in faith as well as education in faith. *Catechesi Tradendae* states: "Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men."¹¹ The Christian life, with its all beauty and significance, could be lived only by the collaboration of liturgy and catechesis. Hence, the Church has a serious responsibility to link the liturgy and catechesis together to make the Christian life more profound and practical. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that the "Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the 'sacraments' to the 'mysteries'."¹² This process and evolution could be achieved only when the Church provides both the liturgy and catechesis. The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Liturgy is always preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion.¹³ According to the New Testament *liturgy* refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the active charity.¹⁴ The Church believes that she is a servant in the image of her Lord in every liturgical celebration and she shares in Christ's priesthood (worship), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and Kingly (service of charity).¹⁵ To bring all these beautiful blessings in the life of the believers, the Church needs the partnership of liturgy and catechesis. If we detach them, then the liturgy will turn out to be mere ritualism and magic and the catechesis will become sheer moralism or intellectualism.

The best example for the integration of catechesis and liturgy we find from the gospel of St. Luke,

in the incident of the experiences of two disciples on their way to Emmaus. It is an inspiring pastoral encounter of Jesus which enriched the disciples with the aspects of catechesis and liturgy that led them to the awareness of Christ's own mysteries and mission.¹⁶ The first section of the incident starts in Lk 24: 13-27 which portrays about the importance of catechetical part by which Jesus clearly deepened their knowledge and enlightened them to receive the truth of their faith in him; and the second section in Lk 24: 28-34 narrates the liturgical component of the event. In the breaking of the bread they were helped to recognize their Master and then they recalled the instructions and clarifications which they had received on the way, from the unidentified fellow-traveller-Jesus. The effect of the catechesis and liturgy is an integral transformation of the believer. The disciples who received catechesis and liturgy from the Lord became the missionaries who could proclaim the truth of resurrection of the Lord. We find the same convergence and scope of catechesis and liturgy in the celebrations of the Church especially in the context of Eucharist. The Word of God prepares the believers to understand the mysteries and grasp the revelation and deepen their knowledge of the symbolic expressions of what they believe and live in the Christian faith. The prayers, rituals and gestures help them to interiorize the faith and become what they believe. Thus, the liturgy accomplishes what the catechesis instructs! For a healthy faith formation both catechesis and liturgy are essential ingredients.

The word *liturgy* comes from the Greek word *Leitourgia*, and it literally means a 'public work' or a service in the name of/on behalf of the people.¹⁷ According to the understanding of the Church, the liturgy, in its entirety, is a sacred sign and a mystery. In the liturgical action prayers of adoration and petition of the Church rise to God, and graces descend upon the members of the Church.¹⁸ Liturgy is, therefore, the privileged place for catechizing the people of God. According to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "In the Church's liturgy the divine blessing is fully revealed and communicated. The Father is acknowledged and adored as the source and the end of all the blessings of creation and salvation. In His Word who became incarnate, died, and rose for us, he fills us with his blessings. Through his word, he pours into our hearts the Gift that contains all gifts, the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ In number 1090 of *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we see that "In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, minister of the sanctuary of the true tabernacle." This nature of liturgy presupposes a real catechesis. There is the preparation of hearts in the liturgy which is the joint work of the Holy Spirit and the assembly especially of its ministers. The grace of the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father's will. These dispositions are the precondition both for the reception of other graces conferred in the celebration itself and the fruits of new life which the celebration is intended to produce afterward.

We find that the liturgy opens up a scope for permanent and ongoing faith formation for people of God. Thus, according to *Catechesi Tradendae*, catechesis is intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action.²⁰ *General Directory for Catechesis* comments that the practice of catechetics testifies to a weak and fragmentary link with the liturgy: limited attention to liturgical symbols and rites, scant use of the liturgical fonts, catechetical courses with little or no connection with the liturgical year; the marginalization of liturgical celebrations in catechetical programmes. The Church is also conscious of her inability in introducing the originality in the pedagogy of faith²¹. As Second Vatican Council teaches in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, “The ministry of the Word also has a liturgical function since, when realized within the context of a sacred action, it is an integral part of action.²² Thus we find the collaborative nature of both liturgy and catechesis.

In the liturgy we find the use of many signs and symbols that share the most important mysteries of our faith and Christian attitudes. In truth, liturgy opens up variety of ways for the faithful to communicate with God and God with the people. Liturgy is the most sacred time of communion between God and Man and it touches the consciousness of Man in a sacred and spiritual way and helps him develop the capacity to respond to God’s invitations in daily life with apt decisions. Thus, a meaningful liturgy has a powerful pedagogical aspect realized through prayers, words, gestures, music, signs, symbols, sacred art, decorations, mental and spiritual dispositions etc. Liturgy is not an aimless act of the Church but it is a calculated endeavour that leads to God experience and transformation of life. *General Catechetical Directory* teaches that a true catechesis should lead the faithful through the visible signs to ponder God’s invisible mysteries of salvation.²³ Today, catechesis is accepted as not only a means of educating in faith but it is the very source of every kind of the Christian formation in the Church. It is the fundamental form of the ministry of the Word which is oriented to the maturation of faith. According to the Oriental and the Orthodox perspective, catechesis is not merely the communication of ‘religious knowledge,’ not training a human being to become a ‘good person,’ but for the edification and for the building up of a member as the part of the Body of Christ. Therefore, the aim of catechesis is to introduce the person into the Church, to integrate him into her life – the life of grace, communion with God, Christian love, unity and spiritual progress towards eternal salvation, for such are the essential fruits of salvation in the Church.²⁴

CREATIVE ROLES OF LITURGY AND CATECHESIS

When catechesis in the liturgy does its creative role of information, formation and transformation then every liturgical celebration will reap the richest spiritual and social effects. The seven sacraments are the channels of grace for the Christian community and it is through the catechesis that every sacrament gets its true meaning, faith actualization and faith experience. If we remove catechesis from the liturgy

and sacramental celebrations of the Church, then we might fall in the meaningless and magical ritualism. In every liturgical act a divine energy is being released and transmitted through its intention and performance. This divine energy comes from the person of Jesus Christ and it becomes the source of sanctification for the recipient of the liturgical act. Hence we have to strike a balance between the rituals and their related catechesis. Catechesis in liturgy profoundly cares for the Word of God, rituals and their implications. Liturgical context is inevitable for a creative faith development, for the instruction on the discipleship of Jesus Christ and toward the education of the Christian faithful to give witness to the Good News in their daily life. We find in catechesis a true realization of the prophetic ministry of Christ; and in liturgy we discover the priestly role of Christ. In Jesus, both the ministry of Word and ministry of Worship take their roots and they are united intrinsically in his person. They are two aspects of a single mission, the saving mission of Christ.²⁵ In the final analysis, *Catechesi Tradendae* states that "Catechesis is necessary both for the maturation of the faith of Christians and for their witness in the world."²⁶

In early times, the institution of Catechumenate was meant for the formation of Christians in the moral uprightness and it also included the instructions for Christian life and preparations for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. As we have seen, all these activities were considered as the part and parcel of one and the same ministry. Thus, we observe an intimate relationship between the sacraments and catechesis in the practice of the early Church. On the one hand, the catechesis prepared people for the reception of sacraments in an eminent way and every form of catechesis necessarily led to the sacraments of faith. On the other hand, an authentic practice of the sacraments is bound to have a formative catechetical aspect. In other words, sacramental and liturgical life is impoverished and turns into hollow ritualism if it is not guided and supported by catechesis. Both catechesis and liturgy fail terribly if they do not come alive to compliment each other.²⁷ Catechesis is meant to attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature the human qualities to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.²⁸ Through the ministries of catechesis and sacred liturgy the Church helps the faithful not to remain childish in faith but to grow into the fullness of Christian discipleship and achieve the goals of God's plan for each one.

THE IMPACT OF CATECHESIS AND LITURGY

William Sherzer says that "If a man does not know what is revealed in liturgy, if liturgy is only a holy blur, then it is something out of focus and it will not serve his faith."²⁹ Catechesis helps liturgy for knowing and loving what is being proclaimed and performed in faith and it removes the liturgy from falling into the category of magical ritual. Real transformation is intended in the celebrant as well as in the participants of the Holy Eucharist. The change of bread and wine is an essential liturgical symbolic action that demands from all of us an authentic change of heart. It is a challenge given to each participant of

Holy Eucharist to become the living presence of Christ in and through the spiritual breaking of one's own self. The Eucharist insists on a true conversion – from selfishness to self emptying, sin to holiness, evil to goodness, darkness to light, death to life and from everything that destroys us to everything that develops us. By participating in the three fundamental roles of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King through the worship and catechesis, we also grow with the fruits of faith, hope and love.

The catechetical and liturgical renewal movements in the late 19th and 20th centuries focussed on the close relationship and formative opportunities of both liturgy and catechesis. When liturgy helps interiorize the faith through symbols and signs in the sacraments and liturgical celebrations, the catechesis in the Church serves preparing the people of God for meaningful and dynamic participation and finally leading to the maturing in faith.³⁰ Catechesis helps the people of God to have full conscious and active participation in the mysteries of Christ which are made available by the sacred liturgy of the Church.³¹ Liturgy needs catechesis inside and outside of its celebration to achieve its goals and fruits. As *General Catechetical Directory* states: "Catechesis must promote an active, conscious, genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanks giving, for repentance, for a community spirit, and for understanding correctly the meaning of creeds. All these are necessary for a true liturgical life."³²

The Church believes that in the liturgy of the New Covenant, every liturgical action, especially the celebration of Eucharist and the sacraments, is an encounter between Christ and the Church. The Christian assembly derives its unity from the 'communion of the Holy Spirit' who gathers the children of God into the one Body of Christ. This assembly transcends racial, social – indeed, all human affinities. Hence, the assembly should prepare itself to encounter its Lord and to become 'a people well disposed'.³³ *Catechesi Tradendae* teaches us that "it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings."³⁴ If we feel that our society is dull and insensitive to the Christian attitudes and life style, it is a real self criticism on the Church's own liturgy and catechesis. For liturgy is not a magical action performed in oblivion and cut away from human realities but from the struggles and difficulties of daily life the liturgy is truly shaped and authenticated. Our social commitments and sensitivity for a just and better humanity must sprig out from an authentic catechesis and liturgy. For *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs, they also instruct."³⁵

Eucharist-- The Topmost Meeting Point of Liturgy and Catechesis

When Jesus commanded at the last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me," he meant that his

followers repeat his actions and words “until he comes” again. His unique Eucharistic action contains the essence of Church’s words and actions, teachings and rituals, celebrations and commemorations. From the very inception of the Church, she was faithful to observe the Lord’s command. As we find in Acts 2: 42: the followers of Christ were devoted to the Apostle’s teaching (catechesis) and the fellowship to the breaking of bread (Eucharist). Thus, the community of believers were strengthened and guided by the catechesis and Eucharist. From the beginning to this day, the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued in the Church so that we are strengthened by the redeeming presence and teachings of Christ. The holy “Eucharist remains the centre of the Church’s life.”³⁶ The early Church believed that the holy Eucharist completes the Christian initiation. Hence Second Vatican Council rightly tells that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”³⁷ The document on Sacred Liturgy tells that the whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Sacraments.³⁸ The Church teaches in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that the “Sacraments are ‘powers that come forth’ from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are ‘the masterworks of God’ in the new and everlasting covenant.”³⁹ We find in the Eucharist the gracious and greatest gift God extended for the salvation of the world. The unique and the only redeemer is present in the Eucharist who teaches and sanctifies the world. The Church continues her ministry of dispensing the salvation in and through her Eucharist. The Eucharist makes available in a mysterious and public way the eternal redemption wrought in Jesus Christ. “It is the culmination both of God’s action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁰ Hence, in the celebration of the Eucharist we discover the highest possibility of faith formation and worship which would lead the attainment of salvation and sanctification of the world.

Pastoral Insights for Eucharistic Catechesis

Karl Rahner suggested that every Christian should consider his/her life as leading to the altar and as deriving from it. The spiritual life of the entire Church, clergy as well as laity, is strengthened and nourished through the celebration of the Eucharist. The Church has only one authentic meal for her sustenance and it is the Eucharist. When the Church stops celebrating the Eucharist, it will be the beginning of her death in a crucial way. Hence, the pastors and the whole Christian community have a heavy duty to make the Eucharistic celebration available and actualize it with serious preparation and diligence. We acknowledge the fact that in our Catholic churches the Eucharist is given the prime place and most of the celebrations are conducted with genuine devotion and with lot of preparations. But at the same, we also find that the celebrations are taken as mere routine repetition of the rituals and muttering of certain prayers. Recently, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

has brought out *Instruction - Redemptionis Sacramentum* to help the Christian celebrations of Eucharist in a worthy manner. The document states that the abuses are rooted in a false understanding of liberty. Yet, the Eucharist is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity or depreciation. The Eucharist should continue to shine forth in all its radiant mystery.⁴¹ Hence, there is an important request in the document to provide an authentic pastoral care and liturgical renewal to keep the patrimony and heritage of the Eucharist and to remove all the elements that lead to the distortion and disharmony.

One can discover many elements that are contributing to the weak and fruitless celebrations of the Eucharist in the present set up. The most important pastoral care we must render to the Church and her faithful is in the areas of liturgy and catechesis because these dimensions deserve our special concern due to their spiritual and social nature. We can observe here some general and vital reasons that hinder a fruitful and meaningful celebration of the Eucharist:

i. Blocks and huddles involved in the worthy celebration of the Eucharist

It is a 'dead celebration;' People have no active participation; Arrogance of the celebrant and the superficial, blank and tactless homily; Unclean and shabby atmosphere of the Church; Regular church-goers don't lead a better life; The priest conducts the celebration with haste and without devotion; The partiality of the pastor to certain members or groups of the parish resulting a very big gap between the members in the parish which ultimately affects the Eucharistic celebration in the Church; Emergence of groups within the Parish and non-cooperation of community members; Sunday is the only holiday after six days of work; Boredom in participating the same rituals without being open to any apt adaptability; The choir taking over the control of the entire procedures in the Liturgy; Feeling that we don't get anything from the liturgical celebrations; Less or no preparation for sacred celebrations; Some times, the liturgy is celebrated in an uncomfortable hall and with insufficient settings and seating arrangements; Lack of proper motivation for the celebration of the Eucharist and the ignorance of the liturgical and formative matters; Lack of Mass text-books and song books; The role of the non-ordained are less encouraged in the liturgical ceremonies; The preoccupations and distractions of the laity as well as the celebrant; The extreme climates and sound pollution in the vicinity of the church; Over stress on donations and financial help for the parish church; Increased temptations to avoid religious celebrations but engaging oneself in secular interests and entertainments. All these reasons demand the Church's special attention in finding solutions and remedies and promote better participation and celebration of the holy Eucharist.

ii. Pastor's attitudes towards the worthy celebration of the Eucharist

In a certain sense we can say that a priest is ordained especially to celebrate the Eucharist and to

help the Christian community to experience God's presence. In the Eucharistic celebrations the people of God should feel that they are participating in a very important event that would transform their life and gain graces which are essential for a meaningful human existence. Pastor has to take special interest in preparing the altar, the readings of the day, choosing of the hymns, etc... The people of God must be given ample opportunities to make the celebration alive and active. He should not fail to catechize people in the liturgical celebrations and it demands a very sincere and genuine love for God and dedication in his ministry. The meaning of each symbol should be explained to the people prior to the celebration. Pastor must always remember that the Eucharist opens the greatest moments of Christian training and Christian faith formation. The Eucharist should be a time of conversion and reconciliation for every Christian individual and community.

In order to make the Eucharistic celebration a real experience, first, the priest has to allow the words and actions in the liturgy be really celebrated: each action and word of the celebrant must express the vibration of the spirit that animates the whole community. Secondly, the behaviour of the celebrant must present the invisible high priest, i.e., Christ. Priest should feel that he is representing Christ in the community. Thirdly, the entrance rites should inculcate a feeling of the presence of Christ in the community and a real sense of the unity in the community. Alternative prayers and creative expressions should be used to have newness and variety in the celebration. Fourthly, the liturgy of the Word must be used as a time of satiating the spiritual thirst and answering the pressing problems and difficulties of life of the community. Fifthly, the general organization in matters of singing, mass-serving, reading, altar decoration, intercessory prayers, etc... are to be previously arranged. A well prepared Eucharistic celebration will bring about lot of spiritual gifts and faith learning in the context of the Eucharist.

iii. Catechesis and the different Movements of Eucharistic Celebration

The gathering together of the Christians in the church itself is a symbol of the Eucharist. As the bread is one, the people of God are made one in the name of Jesus with the one intention of remembering the Lord's command. In this assembly Christ, the high priest, presides invisibly over the Eucharistic celebration. The president of the celebration represents the person of Christ the head (*persona Christi capit/s*). The initial part of the holy Mass prepares God's people with the theme and spirit of the day and makes them attuned to the very gift of the sacrifice of Christ. The spiritual milieu created for this holy Mass should be a reward and an outcome of the use of catechesis. The true catechesis will lead the believers to prepare themselves to become a living -Eucharist through the change of their heart from unhealthy attitudes and by the reception of the grace in Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The liturgy of the Word opens a wide range of catechesis. The reading itself is a catechesis that the hearers are invited to move along with the inspirations of the Holy Spirit who is the very author of these texts. The homily or

the exhortation given after the readings, demands a serious preparation. Only a prepared and prayed over transmission of the interpretation of the Word would bring enlightenment and empowerment in the lives of Christians. The Good News should be alive through the interpretation of it in the homily. A well-preached homily is a true gift of grace by which God would bring substantial change in people's life. The liturgical preaching is also understood as a real catechesis which enables the people of God to accept the Word and to put it into practice in their daily life. The preacher must then consider the texture and different strata of the people who would hear his sermon. All those who take part in the Eucharist have a right to know God's word and be inspired by it. Hence the pastor has a serious duty to consider all those who are present in the assembly - the children, adolescents, youth, adults and the elderly people.

After the homily, the intercessions are made for human family and especially for the faithful and those who are in ministry of serving the people of God. This again has an element of catechesis. The world's needs and aspirations are to be remembered and all those situations that request for Christian consideration must be touched in the intercessor prayer. These prayers bring not only the grace of God but the unity and solidarity of Christians and contextualization of their faith in the existential situation of the world. When the true and touching prayer of the faithful is recited in the holy Mass, the whole worshiping community is inspired to play their part in bringing out peace, harmony and change. Remembering the catechetical prospect of these prayers, the pastor must prepare relevant prayers of faithful. The presentation of the offering comes as the next movement in the Eucharist. When the Church offers what comes forth from God's creation, she brings her entire life, its achievements and failures at the altar. From the beginning of Christianity we see that the Christians brought along with the bread and wine for the Eucharist, the gifts to share with those in need.⁴² This custom of collecting for the service of the poor is inspirational even today. A true offertory presupposes a worthy catechesis. It is through the catechesis that the people of God understand the necessity of being sensitive to the needs of their poor brethren and to become the real offering together with Christ, in the altar of their daily life.

With the *anaphora* the worshipping community comes to the very heart and summit of the celebration. The participants thank God for the great gift of salvation and consecrate themselves together with Jesus for the redemption of the whole world. The Church's greatest gift is the gift of redemption. Hence, the Eucharistic prayer invites a true catechesis of the people of God to become the real victim like Jesus to bring the reign of God in themselves, in their families and in their society. The institution narrative brings the gift of Christ's presence not only under the species of bread and wine but also in the very community of believers who should become the living body and true sacrifice of Christ. A worthy catechesis on the institution narrative will enable the faithful to surrender their entire selves for Christ and thus sanctify themselves to become the true presence of Christ in the world. In the *epiclesis* "the Church

asks the Father to send His Holy Spirit on the bread and wine, so that by His power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit.⁴³ A liturgical catechesis is necessary to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and to make oneself the true extension of Jesus in one's life. In the *anamnesis* the Church remembers the passion, resurrection and the glorious return of Christ. In the *intercessions* that follow point to the universality of the Church and her communion with heaven and earth. She prays for her pastors in the Church and intercede for the living and the dead and brings the entire assembly and the whole world to the realization of one single Church. A significant catechesis on these factors will help the people of God to remain always faithful to each other and to Christ in the world. *The Lord's prayer* itself is a big catechesis. The pastors should teach the abundant riches hidden in the prayer of our Lord and make them faithful to call themselves as the children of God. The *Holy Communion* also brings ample reasons for catechesis. For, the catechesis will make the recipients to turn away from evil and to become authentic to Christ's teaching. It will inspire the faithful to receive the sacrament of reconciliation and make themselves worthy for the reception of the sacred body and precious blood of Christ which are the food for their eternal life. Thus, contemplating on the different stages of the Eucharist we discover the nature of the liturgical catechesis which every pastor must provide to his parishioners.

iv. Five Senses and their role in Liturgy and Catechesis

Can God be experienced by human beings? All theistic religions will answer this question positively with a big 'Yes,' and will prescribe ways and means to attain God-experience. The history of classical world religions speaks about the encounter with the divine and Man's response to the ultimate. In the presence of the divine, man perfects, protects and sanctifies himself and fulfils his inner yearning for transcendence. A true liturgy and catechesis will disclose the real presence of God in every event of man's mundane life and most especially through the religious rituals and prayers. We the Christians believe that through *Creation* and *Incarnation* God made our world really sacred and the Nature itself is the solid proof for the existence of an invisible and loving God. Our world becomes the most important matrix for all our experiences, both bodily and spiritual, earthly and heavenly. Hence, the very presence of our body and mind explains the possibility of man's higher targets and achievements. If God has made us with human body and soul, there is a grave reason for it. The very body and mind become the source of knowing and loving the divine. Man, being a contingent being, is also placed upon this planet with the capability of communicating with the divine. Therefore, the Nature, the physical realities and the faculties of human body and consciousness are true media available for God experience.

God, in the Old Testament, was revealing Himself through the phenomena of the created Nature. The ancient religions discovered the unseen God in visible categories. For every reasonable experience

man needs some symbols and signs. And even the powers of Nature were considered to be true sacraments of divine experience. In the Old Testament, we find that the people of Israel experienced Yahweh in smoke, fire, breeze, thunder and in lightening etc. People could get only a farfetched experience of God who appeared in these natural powers. But, when God became man, in the person of Jesus Christ, we have a perfect mode to recognize the face of God and experience the divine. We humans know our world only through the five senses. All the five senses are valuable media in bringing the data of the external world. By seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting we acquire the abundance of knowledge. God became *Emmanuel*, so that every human person can now touch, taste, smell, see, and hear God in Jesus Christ. Human nature became the perfect order of revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. In our liturgy and catechesis we must introduce the divine knowledge through the Five-senses-categories. Especially in the Eucharistic celebration we must bring all the senses of man satiated, to have a real and significant God-experience. Very often our celebrations lack variety and interest. By employing the creative expressions of the five senses we can re-present God in the liturgical and catechetical sessions. The decorations in the church (Seeing); the organized singing with the assembly (Hearing); by touching the religious symbols like, Bible, Mass text, Cross, Rosary etc (Touching); by incensing and making the area of celebration with divine flavour (Smelling); and finally receiving the holy communion as the food for our eternal life (Taste) we can make the Eucharistic celebration rich and creative. In the ministry of catechesis also we can bring about tremendous amount of utilization of senses-categories. We are living in an age of Computer and communication media achievements. Hence in our catechesis we must introduce the audio visual methods that can quench the senses with divine realities to make man attentive to God.

Conclusion

Even though the Church has taken important steps to develop her liturgy and catechesis, both these ministries remain distinct in the Church life. Liturgy feels a sort of self sufficiency and by that sometimes it neglects the value of catechesis in her celebrations. On the other hand, the catechetical ministry also feels self competence in deepening the faith of the Christian faithful. But whenever we distance these two ministries one from the other, the after effect will be our failure to make man attentive to God and bring essential Christian renewal. Catechesis is the transmission of God's message to man, in human language and experience, for the purpose of evoking commitment and faith. Liturgy is also known as vital moments of worship and transformation of human person. But, the aim of both these ministries is to make available the very presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ and make the believer to deepen the faith and give witness to the Good News. In liturgy and catechesis, man's highest aspirations are really taken care of. As we struggle to rediscover the ancient richness of Christian faith, we should

give more stress to bring the liturgy and catechesis together. For the Christian living and witnessing, we need to combine both these ministries. Eucharist is the centre of all the ministries in the Church; and the combined efforts of catechesis within the liturgy, will bring certainly, the abundance of spiritual fruits for every Christian faithful. Since, the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian faith, it should provide ample opportunities for re-evangelizing the Christians and fostering the true Christian worship. We have to make the Eucharistic celebration a true integration of liturgy and catechesis. Thus, the Eucharistic liturgy and catechesis will help us achieve what St. Richard of Chichester prayed: "O dear Lord, three things I pray: to see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly day by day."

¹ Cf. Deepak Chopra, in *The Week*, July 31, 2005, Malayala Manorama Press, Kochi, p. 32.

² Cf. P. Sreevalsan Menon and Neelam Gupta, *The Week*, Malayala Manorama Press, Kochi, July 31, 2005, p.32-33.

³ Lk 1: 4; Acts 18: 25; Rom 2, 18; Gal 6: 6.

⁴ *Dei Verbum*, no. 24.

⁵ *GCD*, 17, also cf. *CD*, 14.

⁶ *Sharing the Light of Faith*, National Catechetical Directory for the Catholics of the United States, National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States, Washington D.C., 1979, no. 31.

⁷ *De Mysteriis* and *De Sacramentis*, ed. B. Botte, SCh 126 (1966).

⁸ Ed. A. Piédagnel, SCh 126 (1966).

⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, no.7.

¹¹ *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1075.

¹³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 9.

¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1069; Cf. Lk 1:23, Acts 13:2; Rom 15:16, 27.

¹⁵ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1069; cf. Heb 8:2, 6.

¹⁶ Cf. G. Ostdiek, *Liturgical Catechesis*, in The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, P. E. Fink (ed.), Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1990, pp. 167-168.

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1069.

¹⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* nos. 2,5,33; *Lumen Gentium* no. 1, 9.

¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1082.

²⁰ *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23.

²¹ *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 30.

²² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 35; Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1154.

²³ Cf. *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 57.

²⁴ Cf. A. Schmemann, *Liturgy and Life: Lectures and Essays on Christian Development through Liturgical Experience*, Department of Religious Education, New York, 1974, p. 7-23, see also A. Kakkanattu, Christological Catechesis of the Malankara Liturgy, Doctoral DissertationSalesian University, Rome, no.357, 1996, p.225.

²⁵ A. Kakkanattu, *Christological Catechesis of the Malankara Liturgy*, Doctoral dissertation, Salesian University, Rome, no. 357, 1996, p. 227.

²⁶ *Catechesi Tradendae* no, 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 23.

²⁸ *Eph* 4:13.

²⁹ William Sherzer, *Liturgy and Catechetics: Inseparable patrons*, in Johannes Hofinger and Theodore C. Stone, *Pastoral Catechetics*, Herder and Herder, U.S.A., 1964, p.49.

³⁰ *Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 113.

³¹ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14.

³² *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 25.

³³ Cf. *General Catechetical Directory*, no.1097 & 1098.

³⁴ *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23.

³⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1123.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 1343.

³⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, no.11.

³⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 6.

³⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1116.

⁴⁰ Congregation of Rites, instruction, *Eucharisticum mysterium*, no.6.

⁴¹ *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, nos. 7 & 8.

⁴² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1351.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, no.1353.