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Recognizing the Presence of Christ in the Liturgical Assembly

Judith M. Kubicki

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in matters such as the death penalty. Foundations once destroyed can be repaired, or new ones established. The Church is not without allies within its own community, nor among some social scientists. Recently, several scholars have written that prisons must once again become places where virtue is inculcated through a symbolically coherent regimen that reinforces the process of metanoia. Protestant groups, notably "Prison Fellowship," have not only argued in similar terms but have taken steps to oversee correctional institutions organized according to Christian principles.[100] While these are welcome innovations, it is ironic, in the light of history, that secular criminologists and non-Catholics would have a greater appreciation for a Catholic approach to punishment than many members of the hierarchy.[101]

The Catholic Church is responsible for the prison as we know it in the West; that fact cannot be disputed. It has held firm, with few exceptions, to the justification and end of punishment. It has lost account of the means that it developed to bind the two principles together. John Noonan reminds us that moral change in the institutional sphere is as necessary as it is difficult. My intention in this article has not been to argue for putting people in prison; it has been to remind us that for the better part of 1600 years the Catholic Church has argued for putting people in prison. To speak more effectively in the present, the Church would need to take greater account of how it treated criminals in the past. This conclusion summarizes the analytical purpose of this article. The rhetorical purpose has been to argue, also echoing Noonan, that changes in the moral teaching of the Church in the area of crime and punishment must be undertaken not only by attention to history but in conscious witness to Christ. This was attested to by the bishops in their affirmation that Jesus himself "was a prisoner" and in the appeal by Pius XII that we must know and love the prisoners, and bring about their liberation.[102]

[100] Charles Colson, *Justice That Restores* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 2001) 79, 136–37; Francis Cullen, Jody Sundt, and John Wozniac, "The Virtuous Prison: Toward a Restorative Rehabilitation," in *Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice: Essays in Honor of Gilbert Geis,* ed. H. Pontell and D. Shichor (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2000).

[101] Charles Colson admits that his inspiration for a "Christian" prison came from a visit to the Humaita penal facility in Brazil run by two Catholics active in the "Cursillo Movement." The image of Christ as prisoner was central to their vision. Colson writes: "When inmates arrived at Humaita, their chains were removed, and they were told that in this prison they are constrained not by steel but by the love of Christ" (*Justice That Restores* 107).

[102] John T. Noonan, Jr., "Development In Moral Doctrine" *Theological Studies* 54 (1993) 662–77, at 674, 676; Pius XII, "Prisoners, Punishment, and Pardon" 174; U. S. Catholic Bishops, *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration* 18.

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RECOGNIZING THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE LITURGICAL ASSEMBLY

JUDITH MARIE KUBICKI, C.S.S.F.

[The author discusses Christ's presence as perceived and symbolized when an assembly gathers to celebrate Eucharist. Her article consists of four parts: (1) a brief review of recent official church documents on the modes of Christ's presence; (2) an examination of how the relationship of Christ's presence in the eucharistic species to his presence in the Church gathered for worship has been articulated in Christian tradition and in selected 20th-century writings; (3) a consideration of Michael Polanyi's semiotics and Louis Marie Chauvet's theology of symbol; and (4) an application of their thinking to key symbols in the gathering rite of the Roman liturgy.]

BELIEF IN THE PRESENCE OF Christ in the Eucharist is one of the hallmarks of Catholic faith and worship. That this presence is expressed in manifold ways in the liturgy is highlighted in *Sacrosanctum concilium* (1963), the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (no. 7).[1] Official Church documents and theological writings after the Second Vatican Council have affirmed both the truth and importance of that statement. Nevertheless, there continues to exist in both scholarly writing and popular piety an almost exclusive focus on interpreting or understanding the presence of Christ in the sacred species. This is the case despite the fact that theologians have stressed the importance of understanding Christ's presence in the Eucharist first of all in light of his presence in the Church and of avoiding the tendency to isolate any one of the modes from the others. In an effort to contribute to an area that has perhaps received less attention and development, this article focuses on

JUDITH MARIE KUBICKI, C.S.S.F., is assistant professor of theology at Fordham University, Bronx, N.Y. She received her Ph.D. from The Catholic University of America. Her publications concentrate principally on sacramental and liturgical theology as well as on liturgical music. Recently she has written for *The Living Light* (2003) and the *New Theology Review*. She is now working on a book-length study on the topic of this present article.

[1] All Vatican II quotations are taken from "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, gen. ed. Austin Flannery, inclusive language ed. (Northport, N.Y.: Costello, 1996).

Christ's presence as it is perceived and symbolized by and within the liturgical assembly.

Doing sacramental theology today necessarily involves using the resources of several contemporary philosophical approaches, including semiotics, personalism, phenomenology, and existentialism. Indeed, the philosophical approach of contemporary sacramental theologians challenges the previously normative approach of Scholastic theology. Kenan B. Osborne acknowledges that these philosophical disciplines have already begun reshaping the way the West views the sacraments.[2] In fact, in the area of sacraments, a multi-methodological approach is a given "since sacramental reality is itself a highly complex issue involving a number of dynamics from various dimensions of both human and divine life."[3]

Bruce Morrill's assessment of the current situation in sacramental theology also supports the multi-methodological approach to sacramental theology. Morrill rightly observes that a key characteristic of sacramental theology in the second half of the 20th century has been the shift from thinking about the sacraments as objects that dispense grace to perceiving them as relational events of encounters between God and humankind.[4] It was Edward Schillebeeckx who helped us to begin viewing the Church and its sacraments as genuine, human encounters with God in the Spirit of the Risen Christ. By means of a constructive retrieval of ancient Christian sources and the work of Thomas Aquinas, both Schillebeeckx and Rahner as well as others who followed them, opened the field of inquiry concerning sacramental liturgy to the profound range and depth of human experience, including those embodied, symbolic ways in which we meet God through our relating with one another.[5]

As a result of these developments in contemporary sacramental theology, earlier abstract discussions of principles regarding the sacraments have given way to a new focus on the liturgical action itself. Liturgy is approached as the theological source. In one sense, this is not innovative. The fifth-century writer Prosper of Aquitaine is generally credited with coining the phrase *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*. The catechetical writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, and Theodore of Mopsuestia are examples of patristic writers who approached, not only the liturgical texts,

[2] Kenan B. Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World: A Theology for the Third Millennium* (New York: Paulist, 1999) 37.

[3] Ibid. 41.

[4] Bruce T. Morrill, "Initial Consideration: Theory and Practice of the Body in Liturgy Today," in *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999) 1.

[5] Ibid.

but also the ritual as a whole as the location of theological and spiritual disclosure.[6]

By employing some of these contemporary approaches to sacramental theology mentioned above, I consider how the human experience of gathering for worship provides the liturgical assembly with the possibility of perceiving Christ's presence in its midst. I do so in four parts: (1) a brief review of recent church documents on the four modes of Christ's presence; (2) an examination of the relationship of Christ's presence in the eucharistic species to his presence in the Church gathered for worship as articulated in Christian tradition and particularly in select 20th-century theological writings; (3) a consideration of Michael Polanyi's semiotics and Louis Marie Chauvet's theology of symbol; and (4) an application of Polanyi's and Chauvet's understanding of symbol to key symbols in the gathering rite of the Roman liturgy in order to discover whether they assist or hinder a gathered assembly's ability to recognize Christ's presence in their midst.

Thus, while eucharistic presence is the focus of this article, its main concern is exploring an understanding of Christ's presence not as it is privileged in the sacred species of bread and wine, but as it is perceived and symbolized by and within the liturgical assembly. Taking the presence of Christ in the eucharistic assembly as a starting point for addressing the question of eucharistic presence has at least two advantages. On the one hand, it considers the Church and the Church's liturgical action as the first location for perceiving the presence of Christ. On the other hand, it views the symbolic activity of the Church regarding the sacred species in terms of personal relationship.

FOUR MODES OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN RECENT CHURCH DOCUMENTS

Sacrosanctum concilium is the usual reference point today for discussing the four modes of Christ's presence.[7] However, it was Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* (1948) that the conciliar drafters of *Sacrosanctum concilium* used as their model. In fact, the second schema of the constitution followed Pius XII's order for listing the modes, although its final version departed from Pius XII's ordering and mentioned the presence of Christ in the gathered assembly last. Two years later, however, Paul VI in *Mysterium fidei* (1965) returned to Pius XII's ordering. Subsequent Church documents, including

[6] Judith Marie Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual Symbol: A Case Study of Jacques Berthier's Taizé Music*, Liturgia condenda 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999) 170.

[7] Although *Sacrosanctum concilium* speaks of five modes of Christ's presence–the fifth being in the other sacraments–the focus of this article will be only on the four modes in the Eucharist.

the *Instruction on Eucharistic Worship* (1967) and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (1975), followed Paul VI's ordering.[8] Article 27 of the recently promulgated revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002)[9] introduces a discussion of the general structure of the Mass by identifying the various modes of Christ's presence. It mentions the presence of Christ in the assembly first and in the eucharistic elements last. One could argue that the frequent reordering of the listing of the modes indicates some ambivalence regarding their interrelationship and the hierarchy of importance. Nevertheless, because of the unique position of *Sacrosanctum concilium* as a conciliar document, I use its articulation of the four modes for purposes of analysis. The text reads:

> To accomplish so great a work Christ is always present in his church, especially in liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass both in the person of his minister, "the same now offering through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross," and most of all in the eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in church. Lastly, he is present when the church prays and sings, for he has promised "where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20) (no. 7).

This first paragraph of article seven reaffirms belief in the presence of the resurrected Christ in the Church. It opens by mentioning Christ's presence in the Church and it concludes with Matthew 18:20 in order to support that assertion with Christ's own promise. Between the first and last sentence, the specific modes are enumerated. But it is Christ's presence in the Church, specified as the Church gathered for worship, that forms the basis for the possibility of all the other modes of presence.

The familiar quote from Matthew 18:20 is the single scriptural reference for this paragraph. Some biblical scholars consider this verse the christological center of chapter eighteen, even as the presence of the Risen Lord is the foundation of Matthew's Christology.[10] This is the overriding idea that Matthew comes back to in the final verse of Matthew's Gospel when he quotes the Risen Lord promising, "And know that I am with you always;

[8] See Michael G. Witczak, "The Manifold Presence of Christ in the Liturgy," *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 681–90. The first section of this article provides a helpful comparison of the ordering of these modes in key documents.

[9] The Latin edition, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* was published in 2000; the English translation, entitled *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington: USCCB, 2003) was completed by ICEL in 2002 and approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in early 2003. It includes adaptations particular to the dioceses of the United States.

[10] Ulrich Lutz, *Matthew A Commentary*, vol. 2, *Matthew 8–20*, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 458.

yes, to the end of time" (Matthew 28:20). Both verses contain the promise of the presence of the resurrected Christ in the Church. Matthew 18:20 is usually assumed to be referring to a worship context because it mentions members of the Church "gathered" in Christ's name. However, in light of the entire chapter 18, the word "gathered" could also refer to a variety of other church functions, including fraternal correction and forgiveness. Indeed, as Lutz notes: "expanding the promise of the presence of Jesus to include all of the church's functions that are performed in his name is in keeping with Matthew's Christology, which places so much emphasis on mission, community, love, and suffering as characteristics of the Church. Nevertheless, the history of this verse's interpretation suggests by it ecclesiastical usage that 'gathered' is taken to mean the occasion of some type of formal worship as Church. Also important is the condition of gathering 'in the Lord's name.'"[11]

Thus, in this brief verse Matthew articulates an understanding of the Church that enjoys the presence of the Risen Lord when it comes together or gathers in his name, that is, as Church. No. 7 of *Sacrosanctum concilium* quotes this verse to support the Church's faith in the manifold presence of Christ in its midst specifically when it gathers for worship. Because of the way the paragraph is framed, beginning and concluding with mention of Christ's presence in the Church gathered for liturgy, the document identifies this mode as the basis for all of the others, including the presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine.

THE RISEN CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH

Understanding the presence of Christ in the worshiping assembly derives from belief in the presence of the Risen Lord in his Church. Modern theologians, particularly Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Piet Schoonenberg, have all contributed to an understanding of the Church as sacrament and therefore as the primary location of Christ's presence in the world. Rahner describes that presence as sacramentality when he states: "The Church is the abiding presence of that primal sacramental word of definitive grace, which Christ is in the world, effecting what is uttered by uttering it in sign. By the very fact of being in that way the enduring presence of Christ in the world, the Church is truly the fundamental sacrament, the well-spring of the sacraments in the strict sense."[12] Rahner expresses his understanding of the Church as the primordial sacrament as *Ursakrament*. For Rahner, this presence of Christ in the Church necessarily precedes the possibility of the presence of Christ in the eucharistic species.

[11] Ibid. 460.

[12] Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

Schillebeeckx notes that the basis of the entire eucharistic event is Christ's personal gift of himself to all of humankind and, within this gesture, to the Father. The Eucharist is the sacramental form of this event.[13] Further on Schillebeeckx states even more explicitly: "I should like to place much greater emphasis than most modern authors have done on this essential bond between the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and his real presence as Lord living in the Church. After all, there is ultimately only one real presence of Christ, although this can come about in various ways."[14] Schillebeeckx underscores the fact that the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic species is not an end in itself. That is, Christ's gift of himself is not ultimately directed toward the bread and wine, but toward the community.[15]

Similarly, for Schoonenberg, the starting point for a discussion of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is not the presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the consecrated bread and wine, but his presence in the community, particularly the community in the act of celebrating the Eucharist.[16] Like Schillebeeckx, Schoonenberg stresses the importance of seeing the presence of Christ in the sacred species in relation to his presence both in the proclamation of the Word and in the community.[17] He also understands the eucharistic presence as derived from Christ's personal presence in the Church.[18] In developing his theology of presence, Schoonenberg explains that "the whole presence of the Lord in his Church—in the celebration of the Eucharist—is important, even more important than his presence in the sacred species alone. Only when we try to plumb the depths of the riches of this presence in community do we find therein the meaning of the real presence under the sacred species. . . ."[19]

This contemporary emphasis in the presence of Christ in the Church is a retrieval of a belief held by the early Church and gradually obscured by the late medieval period. In fact, it may well be that this loss of the community's consciousness of itself as the Body of Christ contributed to the controversies regarding the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.[20] How did this happen?

[13] Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist*, trans. N. D. Ward (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 137.

[14] Ibid. 138.

[15] Ibid. 137; see also Edward Schillebeeckx, "Transubstantiation, Transfinalization, Transignification," in *Living Bread, Saving Cup: Readings on the Eucharist*, ed. R. Kevin Seasoltz (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1987) 179.

[16] William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo, 1989) 217.

[17] Ibid. 234.

[18] Piet Schoonenberg, "The Real Presence in Contemporary Discussion," *Theology Digest* 15 (1967) 8.

[19] Piet Schoonenberg, "Presence and the Eucharistic Presence," *Cross Currents* 17 (Winter 1967) 40.

According to William Crockett, there occurred in the course of the Middle Ages a gradual separation between the community, on the one hand, and the gifts of bread and wine, on the other. The community's earlier consciousness of itself as the Body of Christ diminished as its consciousness of the presence of Christ as an object on the altar increased. This development was accompanied by a loss of symbolic consciousness. The controversies over whether Christ is truly present in the elements resulted from both a loss of consciousness of the community as the locus of the presence of Christ and also of the symbolic consciousness that had understood the presence of Christ in the elements as sacramental. Such a dichotomy did not exist in the patristic period, as is clear from the writings of Augustine on this topic, especially his sermons 229 and 272.[21]

In sermon 272, Augustine makes some clear connections between the reality of the Body and Blood of Christ in the sacred species and in the assembled worshipers to whom he is preaching. Referring to Christ's presence in the sacred species, Augustine poses the question: "How can bread be his body? And the cup, or what the cup contains, how can it be his blood?"[22] His answer to these questions involves an explication, not only of the bread and wine as sacramental, but also of the Pauline teaching on the Church as Body of Christ. Augustine explains:

> The reason these things, brothers and sisters, are called sacraments is that in them one thing is seen, another is to be understood. What can be seen has a bodily appearance, what is to be understood provides spiritual fruit. So if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the apostle telling the faithful, *You, though are the body of Christ and its members* (1 Cor. 12:27). So if it's you that are the body of Christ and its members, it's the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord's table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply *Amen*, and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear, you see, is *The body of Christ*, and you answer, *Amen*. So be a member of the body of Christ, in order to make that *Amen* true.[23]

In other words, Augustine reasons that if his listeners want to understand the Eucharist as sacrament, they must begin by understanding themselves as the Body of Christ. The mystery which they receive is the mystery that sums up their own identity as Christ. Augustine's understanding of Eucha-

[20] Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* 232.

[21] Ibid. 233.

[22] *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*. Part III: Sermons. Vol. 7: Sermons 230–272 B on the Liturgical Seasons, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (New Rochelle, N.Y.: New City, 1993) 300. Latin text in PL 38.1246–47.

[23] Ibid. Latin text in PL 38.1247.

rist is directly related to his understanding of Church. Later in the sermon, he sums up his theology with the often quoted exhortation: "Be what you can see, and receive what you are.[24]

Sermon 229 similarly focuses on the Church as the Body of Christ, but it includes the more specific emphasis on unity. Quoting from the tenth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Augustine says, "One loaf, one body, is what we, being many are" (1 Cor. 10:17).[25] He unpacks the verse by explaining:

> However many loaves may be placed there, it's *one loaf*, however many loaves there may be on Christ's altars throughout the world it's *one loaf*. But what does it mean, *one loaf*? He [Paul] explained very briefly: *one body is what we, being many, are*. This is the body of Christ, about which the apostle says, while addressing the Church, *But you are the body of Christ and his members* (1 Cor. 12:27). What you receive is what you yourselves are, thanks to the grace by which you have been redeemed; you add your signature to this, when you answer *Amen*. What you see here is the sacrament of unity.[26]

Augustine is highlighting the unity of the Church as the *res sacramenti*. Scholasticism gradually moved away from emphasizing *res sacramenti*, that is, the *communio ecclesiastica*. This *res sacramenti* or unity of the Mystical Body is another way of describing the life of the community and the individual in Christ. Instead, Scholasticism began to emphasize *res et sacramentum*, that is, the real presence of Christ under the form of consecrated bread and wine. In the patristic period, the primary emphasis was not on the eucharistic presence per se, but on the purpose of that presence—the presence of Christ in the community. Although Thomas Aquinas does identify the *res sacramenti* as the unity of the Church,[27] his treatment of the Eucharist fails to situate his sacramental theology within ecclesiology. In fact, the Church gathered for worship, which had played such a central role

[24] Ibid. 301. Latin text in PL 38.1247–48.

[25] See Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of its Interpretation*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999) 293. Mazza points out that it is at this verse that Paul shifts his focus from the Church universal to the Church as gathered assembly at eucharistic worship. In fact, this passage seems to have influenced the development of the epiclesis over the assembly that appears in *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.25. Mazza suggests that the theological inspiration for the introduction of the epiclesis originated in the desire to highlight the Pauline doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ. Latin text in J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina. Supplementum* vol. 2, pt. 2 (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960) 554–55.

[26] *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*. Part III: Sermons. Volume 6: Sermons 184—229Z on the Liturgical Seasons, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (New Rochelle, N.Y.: New City, 1993) 269–70. Latin text, ibid. 555.

[27] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 73, a. 3.

in patristic theology, has no apparent role in Aquinas's theological system. For Aquinas, it is the ordained minister who is the complete subject of the liturgical action.[28] All of these factors served to build momentum for the various eucharistic controversies. The subsequent focus on the many issues related to the question of Christ's presence in the elements of the bread and wine finally resulted in a post-Tridentine theological preoccupation with *res et sacramentum* to the neglect of *res sacramenti*.[29] This development is particularly significant because, in the perception of popular piety, it helped to dislodge the celebration of the Eucharist from its ecclesial context. In practice, the sacrament came to be adored, but not eaten.[30] The gathered assembly came to perceive Christ's presence solely in the consecrated bread and wine. Eventually, the sacrament of unity of the Church became the sacrament of union of the believer with Christ.[31]

Schillebeeckx offers a perspective that clearly ties the primitive Church's understanding of the meaning of the eucharistic meal to its self-understanding as Church. Originally, the disciples experienced their personal relationship with Jesus by sharing table fellowship with him. After the Resurrection, the eucharistic meal became an experience of their personal relationship with the resurrected Christ. More specifically, the liturgical words over the bread and wine "expressed what the personal relationship—the community at table—with Jesus meant to the primitive Church and continued to mean after his departure—namely, his real presence in the assembled community. Jesus had died, but his followers had the visible experience of his continued life and active presence among them, because they, the believers, formed one community by virtue of his death 'for our sins' and his resurrection."[32] In this way, the sharing of the Eucharist after the Ascension became the occasion for recognizing, once again, his continued presence among them. This is quite different from the eventual shift to perceiving the presence of Christ almost solely in the sacred species, quite distinct from the community's gathering to celebrate the Eucharist. Later generations of Christians have not had the personal experience of table fellowship with Jesus to inform their celebration of the subsequent ritual of the Eucharist. Lacking that personal memory, the Church relies, not only on Scripture and tradition, but also on the power of ritual symbols to make the necessary connections.

If the Church is the presence of the Resurrected Christ in the world, a

[28] Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist* 208.

[29] Paul H. Jones, *Christ's Eucharistic Presence: A History of the Doctrine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994) 208.

[30] Ibid. 208–9.

[31] Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist* 208.

[32] Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 123.

starting point for considering the possibility of the assembly's recognizing the presence of Christ in its midst should depend, to some extent at least, on whether they recognize themselves as Church. That is, a sense of Church is a prerequisite for a sense of presence—Christ's presence to us, our presence to Christ and to each other. The ritual action of gathering, with all its symbolic interplay, is one of those interpersonal dynamics that can provide a sense of community, belonging, and hospitality. A logical first place, then, for examining the possibility of the experience of community that might enable a sense of Church, and ultimately a sense of Christ's presence in the assembly, is the gathering rite. Its purpose is to provide the possibility for individuals to experience a sense of belonging to the group gathered in a significant way, one that includes not only feeling welcomed, but also belonging as an integral participant. What is at stake here is the negotiating of identity and the mediating of relationships. These are achieved through the symbolic activity that constitutes the eucharistic rite.[33] The gathering rite is the entrée into that symbolic activity.

THEOLOGY OF SYMBOL AND SEMIOTICS

Earlier I observed that one of the developments that led to the medieval eucharistic controversies was the gradual loss of symbolic consciousness. In the patristic period, a strong sense of the symbolic was alive and well in the Church and in the culture in general. Symbols were understood to participate in and to make present the reality they symbolized. Gradually, however, the unfortunate dichotomy that was set up between symbol and reality impoverished medieval appreciation of the power of symbols to mediate reality. Such a development had particularly negative implications for liturgical and sacramental practice since, as ritual activity, worship is built of a complexus of symbols that interact in order to communicate meaning. In this section of my article I wish to propose Michael Polanyi's semiotics and Louis-Marie Chauvet's theology of symbol as a potential interpretive framework for exploring the generation of theological meaning that occurs when the Church gathers to celebrate the Eucharist.

When Christians gather at the eucharistic table, they engage in ritual behavior that involves interaction with a variety of symbols within a particular cultural context. It is this engagement that builds identity and relationships. In other words, the symbolic activity of celebrating the Eucharist

[33] It would be possible to examine the entire eucharistic rite to discover symbolic elements that enable the assembly to perceive the presence of Christ in their midst. Such a large project, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

builds the Church.[34] To understand how this occurs, we will consider the insights of semiotics. The semiologist Gino Stefani argues for the appropriateness of applying semiotics to an analysis of the liturgy since the liturgy is an ensemble of symbols performed according to the laws of Christian worship and those that regulate the action and expression of human groups. He explains: "The liturgy is an ensemble of signs, that is to say, of actions in which the dominant value is situated in the order of signification . . . . That is why it is correct to consider liturgical science as a branch of semiology, the general science of signs. . . . It is thus normal for semiological reflection to devolve upon the liturgy insofar as it is human communication, just as it is normal to appeal to theology to clarify the purpose and content of the liturgy insofar as it is a sacred action and to psycho-sociology to analyze the celebration insofar as it is a human action *tout court*."[35] The approach of semiotics is particularly useful in the analysis of liturgical action because it pays just as much attention to the nonverbal as it does to the verbal. Thus it provides the conceptual apparatus for approaching the analysis of such ritual components as actions, gestures, movements in space, the space itself, images, sacred objects, vestments, color, music, and silence.[36]

The schema for distinguishing sign and symbol put forth by semiotician Michael Polanyi can be helpful in understanding symbol as participating in the reality that it symbolizes. According to Polanyi, there is an important distinction between indicators—his term for signs—and symbols. Indicators, or signs, point in a subsidiary way to that focal integration upon which they bear. Of themselves, these indicators possess little interest. Rather, the interest lies in the object to which they point. To explain his argument, Polanyi uses the example of the name of a building (S) and the building itself (F). The name functions as the subsidiary (S) pointing to the building

[34] Henri de Lubac is the theologian credited with saying that the Eucharist makes the Church; see Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993). Louis-Marie Chauvet's theology of symbol also supports this claim.

[35] The original French text is found in Gino Stefani, "Essai sur les communications sonores dans la liturgie," *Paroisse et liturgie* 52 (1970) 99–100. This translation is by Jon Michael Joncas and is found in his article "Musical Semiotics and Liturgical Musicology: Theoretical Foundations and Analytic Techniques," *Ecclesia Orans* 8 (1990) 198–99. See also Judith Marie Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual Symbol* 95.

[36] Gerard M. Lukken, "Semiotics and the Study of Liturgy," *Studia Liturgica* 17 (1987) 114. See also Gerard Lukken and Mark Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture: Applying the Semiotics of A. J. Greimas and the Paris School to the Analysis of Church Buildings*, Liturgia condenda 1 (Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1993).

But the true object of interest or focal attention (F) is not the name, but the building.[37] In the case of signs, the subsidiary (S), or name of the building, lacks interest. The building itself (F), that is, the focal point, is what possesses interest. Polanyi explains that the integration resulting from this dynamic movement is self-centered, since it is made *from* the self as center *to* the object of our focal attention.[38] This is how signs function, that is, those indicators that do not participate in the reality to which they point.

On the other hand, Polanyi presents symbols as those phenomena in which the subsidiary clues (S) are of intrinsic interest to us because they enter into meanings in such a way that we are "carried away" by these meanings. That is, in the case of symhols our involvement is of such a nature that the relation of "bearing upon" and the location of intrinsic interest is much more complex.[39] In the case of symbols, the locus of interest is reversed. That is, in the case of symbols, the subsidiary clues are of more interest to us than the focal point itself. Polanyi's example of the American flag clarifies his point. What gives the flag meaning is that we put our whole existence as citizens of the United States into it. Without the surrender of ourselves into that piece of cloth, the flag would remain only a piece of cloth. It would not be a symbol of our country. It is, rather, our many diffuse and boundless memories of our country and of our life in it that give the flag meaning by being embodied and fused in it.

This complex dynamic does not operate, however, in a straight line from subsidiary clues to perceiver. Rather, our perception of the focal object, in the process of symbolization, "carries us back toward (and so provides us with a perceptual embodiment of) those diffuse memories of our lives (i.e., of ourselves) which bore upon the focal object to begin with."[40] Thus we can say that the symbol "carries us away" since in surrendering ourselves we are drawn into the symbol's meaning. What is significant about Polanyi's schema is that it illustrates the participation of the subject as key in the coming to meaning of the symbol. By surrendering to the symbol, we accomplish the integration of those diffuse parts of ourselves that are related to the symbol. That is, in surrendering to the symbol, we are carried away by it.[41]

Polanyi's distinction between signs and symbols highlights two points: (1) signs function on the level of cognition, providing us with information; (2) symbols function on the level of recognition, providing us, not with information, but with integration. Furthermore, this integration occurs both on the personal and the interpersonal level, that is, both within a subject and

[37] Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975) 70–71.
[38] Ibid. 71.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid. 73.
[41] Ibid.

between subjects. This schema further highlights how meaning comes to subjects through their past experiences and within the particular cultural and social milieu that involves relationships with other subjects.[42] Thus, Polanyi's analysis of the apprehension of meaning can provide us with an interpretive tool for investigating how the Eucharist as ritual activity using a particular array of cultural symbols enables the gathered assembly to recognize the presence of Christ in their midst, indeed to recognize themselves as members each of the Body of Christ.

Michael Polanyi's semiotics is particularly compatible with Louis-Marie Chauvet's theology of symbol. This is the case because Chauvet places the critical thrust of his theology in the direction of believing subjects themselves and locates his theology of symbol at the heart of mediation by language, by culture, and by desire.[43] Chauvet's project is to replace the notion of symbol as instrument with the notion of symbol as mediation. He captures the radical nature of symholizing in all of human life when he states:

> Reality is never present to us except in a mediated way, which is to say, constructed out of the symbolic network of the culture which fashions us. This symbolic order designates the system of connections between the different elements and levels of a culture (economic, social, political, ideological—ethics, philosophy, religion . . .), a system forming a coherent whole that allows the social group and individuals to orient themselves in space, find their place in time, and in general situate themselves in the world in a significant way—in short, to find their identity in a world that makes "sense," even if, as C. Levi-Strauss says, there always remains an inexpungible residue of signifiers to which we ean never give adequate meanings.[44]

This assertion identifies the foundational principle of Chauvet's sacramental reinterpretation of Christian existence: all reality is mediated. Two points are key for applying this principle to an interpretation of the presence of Christ in the eucharistic assembly. The first is that symbols mediate reality by negotiating connections. The second is that the connections allow subjects both as members of a social group and as individuals to make sense of their world and to find their identity by discovering relationships. Furthermore, according to Chauvet, symbolizing is a dynamic that involves the active participation of subjects in mediating connections and in discovering their identity and their place in their social world. Both of these foci—active participation aud a consideration of the subject within a social group—make Chauvet's approach appropriate for examining symbolizing—that is sacramental activity—within a liturgical framework.

[42] Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual Symbol* 99–100.
[43] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995) 41.
[44] Ibid. 84–85.

The notions of identity and relationship are intimately connected in this approach to symbolizing activity. This corresponds to the ancient understanding of symbol, derived from the Greek word *symballein* ("to throw together"). Partners in a contract would each retain one part of the symbol that separately possessed no value. The two halves joined, however, "symbolized" or confirmed the original agreement established by the symbol. Thus the symbol functioned as an expression of a social pact based on mutual recognition in the rejoining of the two halves. In this way the symbol functioned as a mediator of identity.[45] In the case of the eucharistic assembly, there are "many parts," that is, each individual member of the assembly, who *by gathering* for Eucharist somehow mediate their identity, not only as assembly, (and therefore a concrete instance of Church), but also as the presence of Christ in a particular time and place.

The aspect of *gathering* is key here. For just as the individual pieces of the *symballein* do not have the ability to confirm the contract until joined together, so too the individual members of the assembly do not have separately the same power to symbolize the presence of Christ which is theirs when they are gathered together as Church. This is certainly in keeping with the promise of Christ recorded in Matthew: "Where two or three gather in my name, I shall be there with them" (18:20). This does not guarantee, however, that gathering together in the same space will necessarily constitute a group of individuals into a community that we could call Church or Body of Christ. Much more than coming together is required. Persons sharing the same space on the subway or in line at the supermarket will not normally experience a sense of being in meaningful relationship with the other persons with whom they have been "thrown together." There is no mutual contract or agreement that such a gathering confirms. On the other hand, when Christians gather "in Christ's name," their gathering to celebrate the Eucharist is in fulfillment of a "contract" signed or sealed at baptism, a contract that identifies them as followers of Christ and as people who are "qualified" to come to the table to celebrate in the Lord's name.

A common element in both Polanyi's semiotics and Chauvet's theology is that both approaches view symbols as mediations of recognition within a community or social world. Furthermore, that recognition evokes participation and allows an individual or a group to orient themselves, that is, to discover their identity and their place in their world. This is especially true in a ritual setting, Chauvet points out, since ritual is able to provide, because of its very nature, those most contingent and culturally determined aspects that are the very epitome of mediation.[46]

[45] Ibid. 112.

[46] Ibid. 110–11.

Thus far one can say that Eucharist as liturgical action is an ensemble of signs or symbols and that it is an action whose dominant value is situated in the order of signification. Because that is the case, recognition rather than cognition is the primary dynamic. The purpose of symbolic activity, according to both Polanyi and Chauvet is not to provide information but integration that results from recognition. In order to understand how the gathered assembly might be enabled to recognize itself as the presence of Christ, a useful approach is to study the symbolizing activity that might mediate that recognition. Furthermore, if, as Chauvet insists, all reality is mediated, the symbolic network set up by the ritual is the very place where members of the gathered assembly orient themselves in space and time and discover their identity in relationship to Christ and to each other. Therefore, the last section of this article will examine a representative sampling of the some of the symbols in the gathering rite in order to determine how the celebration of these symbols might either reveal or conceal Christ's presence to and in the gathered assembly.

THE SYMBOLIZING ACTIVITY OF THE GATHERING RITE

Once again, our starting point is the belief that when the Christian community gathers for worship, the Risen Christ is present in their midst. This presence is not dependent on any other mode of Christ's presence, for example, his presence in the reserved sacrament in the tabernacle.[47] What, then, are the symbols that interplay with the assembly as they gather to worship and enable them to recognize Christ in their midst? In other words, to use the language of Robert Sokolowski,[48] how is the presence of Christ in the assembly *disclosed* to the assembly? Key symbols to consider include, among others: (1) the architectural space, including the arrangement of seating, the placement of the altar, and the placement of the tabernacle; (2) gestures and postures.

Architectural Space

The seating arrangement of the church building itself structures[49] the assembly in relation to each member, each liturgical minister, the altar, and

[47] Schoonenberg, "Presence" 52–53. See above n. 18.

[48] See Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1993).

[49] Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* can assist in understanding why the architecture of a worship space can be significant. He defines *habitus* as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to act as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of [cultural] practices and representations . . . ." See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Cambridge University, 1977) 72.

the tabernacle, if it is located in the main worship area. Visual and structural lines of the building focus attention and give prominence to specific symbols. Several questions can be asked regarding this first set of symbols. Does seating in the round enable worshipers to experience a sense of belonging to a group rather than being anonymous attendees? Does the seating allow for a balanced interplay between the various modes of Christ's presence? Does seating in straight rows draw worshipers to fix their attention on the altar or tabernacle? If the visual sight of the tabernacle draws worshipers into an immediate awareness of Christ's presence in the reserved sacrament, does this focus distract from an awareness of Christ's presence in the local church community gathered in that space?

In several articles of the document *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops addresses these issues, but a close reading uncovers some inconsistencies. On the one hand, for example, article 22 reads:

> In building a house for the Church that is also the house of God on earth all the expressions of Christ's presence have prominence of place that reflects their proper nature. Among these, the eucharistic species is accorded *supreme prominence*. From the very beginning of the planning and design process, parishes will want to reflect upon the relationship of the altar, the ambo, the tabernacle, the chair of the priest celebrant, and the space for congregation.[50]

One cannot be absolutely certain whether the comment "the eucharistic species is accorded supreme prominence" is limited to the reserved sacrament or includes also the species confected within the framework of the eucharistic action that takes place at the altar. The document acknowledges the importance of the relationship of all of these symbols in mediating "expressions of Christ's presence." However, although the article mentions first the presence of Christ "in all the baptized who gather in his name," it specifies that the eucharistic species is to be accorded "supreme prominence." Mention of the tabernacle in the sentence which follows suggests that it is the reserved species that is to be given prominence.

In the context of discussing the sacred space for celebrating the Eucharist, the expression "supreme prominence" poses at least two problems. If "prominence of place" should reflect their "proper nature," it seems that the Church as primordial sacrament should be given supreme prominence, at least within the context of the eucharistic action. A key insight of Vatican II is that the Church is realized in each local church.[51] Hence, each gathered assembly, as instance of the Church, is the location of the presence of Christ. The very title of the document "Built of Living Stones," is an insightful play on the relationship of church as building to church as the *ecclesia* or people of God that it houses. If the primary action that takes place in the church building is the Church's "doing Eucharist," then the phrase "supreme prominence" in reference to the reserved sacrament skews that understanding.

[50] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship* (Washington: USCCB, 2000) 22.

[51] Joseph Komonchak, "Toward a Theology of the Local Church," in *FABC (Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference) Papers*, n. 42, April 1986.

On the other hand, elsewhere in the document, *Built of Living Stones* does acknowledge the need to maintain a balance between the assembly's perception of the presence of Christ in the reserved sacrament and in the eucharistic action. Two statements regarding the placement of the tabernacle in relationship to the altar are mentioned twice in the course of the document. The first is found in articles 79 and 250: "In these instances, a balance must be sought so that the placement of the tabernacle does not draw the attention of the faithful away from the eucharistic celebration and its components." The other statement is found in articles 70 and 251: "Ordinarily, there should be a sufficient distance to separate the tabernacle and the altar. When a tabernacle is located directly behind the altar, consideration should be given to using distance, lighting, or some other architectural device that separates the tabernacle and reservation area during Mass but that allows the tabernacle to be fully visible to the entire worship area when the eucharistic liturgy is not being celebrated." Both statements acknowledge the tension which can result when the tabernacle is perceived as holding the position of "supreme prominence" within an architectural space in which the primary activity is celebrating the Eucharist. In addition, both statements make clear recommendations that the reserved sacrament not be given "supreme prominence" within the space assigned for celebrating the Eucharist, especially when that is the ritual action taking place. The tabernacle can be considered, in the words of Chauvet, "part of the symbolic network of the culture" which has fashioned Catholic identity for centuries. This symbol negotiates strong relationships among the community and between the individual and Christ by means of the cult of eucharistic adoration. Its very power as symbol, however, can potentially detract from the gathered assembly's ability to experience or express an awareness of Christ's presence in their midst as they gather to celebrate the Eucharist. There is general agreement among theologians that all modes of Christ's presence need to be perceived in relationship to each other. However, in this case, the relationship requires that Christ's presence in the gathered assembly be given "supreme prominence" when that assembly comes together to engage in the very activity which constitutes it as Church and therefore as the presence of Christ. Furthermore, the growing instances of communities worshiping on Sundays in the absence of a priest threatens to further undermine the gathered assembly's grasp of the distinction between their role in celebrating the Eucharist versus their reception of com-

munion in a liturgy of the Word. If the gathered assembly fails to comprehend the radical difference between the eucharistic liturgy and Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest, that failure might well be at least partially attributed to the manner in which the symbols of the liturgy are handled during ordinary celebrations of the Eucharist. What is at stake is our understanding of Church and of the relationship of the Eucharist to the Church.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002) also addresses the location of the tabernacle in a church building. Article 314 states: "In accordance with the structure of each church and legitimate local customs, the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer." For the most part, this statement simply reiterates guidelines mentioned in several earlier documents. The description of the placement of the tabernacle in a "prominent" part of the church is qualified to some extent by the following article (315) which states that the tabernacle should "not be on an altar on which Mass is celebrated." This has, of course, been common practice since the reforms of Vatican II. However, placing the tabernacle in a prominent part of the church, even if it is not on the altar on which Mass is celebrated, can easily mean that it is clearly visible during the celebration of the Eucharist. After stipulating that the tabernacle cannot be placed on the altar on which Mass is celebrated, article 315 offers two alternative locations. The first to be listed is "in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in a form and place more appropriate, not excluding on an old altar no longer used for celebration." The alternative placement is "even in some chapel suitable for the faithful's private adoration and prayer and organically connected to the church and readily visible to the Christian faithful" (art. 315). The order in which the two suggestions are mentioned seems to indicate a preference for locating the tabernacle in the sanctuary. Certainly such a location could be described as "prominent." Having a chapel of reservation, "organically connected to the church" could also provide appropriate prominence, but without the same affect as the visual prominence of the tabernacle in the sanctuary. Which option is exercised depends on the judgment of the diocesan bishop (art. 315). The theological implications of choosing one option over another, however, go far beyond the niceties of either esthetics or convenience.

Gestures and Postures

An array of symbolic gestures accompany the gathering of the community. These include crossing the threshold of the church door, assembling in the narthex or gathering space outside the main worship space, blessing

oneself with holy water, and genuflecting if the reserved sacrament is present or bowing to the altar if it is not. On the one hand, kneeling and bowing one's head in private prayer in preparation for the liturgy may be part of gathering. On the other hand, instead of observing silence and prayer, some may greet those around them and engage in brief conversation. Still others may be occupied with preparing to serve in a variety of ministries. Several questions can be asked about these gestures and postures. How does the act of entering a sacred space communicate an awareness of Christ's presence in the sacred space? Does entering the sacred space remind worshipers of their own dignity as members of the Body of Christ? Gestures such as blessing oneself with holy water, genuflecting to the reserved sacrament, and kneeling in private prayer are, like the tabernacle, "part of the symbolic network of the culture" which has fashioned Catholic identity for centuries. Do these symbolic gestures enable worshipers to recognize Christ's presence in the reserved sacrament? In the gathered community? When these symbolic gestures focus on the reserved sacrament at the very moment when the assembly is gathering to perform a communal action that constitutes them as Church and as the presence of Christ, it should not be surprising that the level of recognition of this mode of Christ's presence may be significantly diminished.

Article 23 of *Built of Living Stones* acknowledges the power of symbolic gestures to affect the community's relationship with God when it states:

> Gestures, language, and actions are the *physical*, *visible*, and *public* expressions by which human beings understand and manifest their inner life. Since human beings on this earth are always made of flesh and blood, they not only will and think, but also speak and sing, move and celebrate. These human actions as well as physical objects are also the signs by which Christians express and deepen their relationship to God.

Chauvet's explanation of the radical nature of symbolizing comes into play here again. The gestures and postures that engage the community when they gather for Eucharist orient them in space and situate them in their world (a world of faith and commitment) in a significant way. That is, performing the various gestures is meant to enable them to find their identity as members of the community and followers of Christ. In discussing the body as speech, Chauvet describes the body as "the primordial place of every symbolic joining of the 'inside' and the 'outside.'"[52]

So it is by means of gestures and postures that faith is both expressed and shaped. At issue is how standing, kneeling, processing, bowing, proclaiming, listening, eating, drinking, speaking, and singing—and doing it together—promote an awareness of Christ's presence within the community

[52] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* 147.

and an integrated experience of Christ's presence in the various modes that are constitutive of the ritual. The recent controversy over the appropriate posture of the assembly for the eucharistic prayer is an important example of how posture mediates meaning. In the section titled "Movements and Posture," *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* states that the "gestures and postures of the priest, the deacon, and the ministers, as well as those of the people, ought to contribute to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, so that the true and full meaning of the different parts of the celebration is evident and that the participation of all is fostered" (art. 42). The statement is making an important point. Gestures do matter and, in fact, contribute to the perception of theological meaning.[53]

In another section, the *General Instruction* lays out norms for genuflection and bowing. Article 274 states that if the tabernacle is present in the sanctuary, the priest, deacon, and other ministers genuflect at the beginning and end, but not during the Mass. All others, that is, the assembly, genuflect, unless they are moving in procession. Kneeling and genuflecting are postures that ordinarily focus the Catholic imagination on the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. By discouraging genuflections to the tabernacle during the actual celebration of the Eucharist, the *General Instruction* appears to be at least tacitly acknowledging the difficulties involved in drawing attention to the reserved sacrament when the assembly gathers to do the Eucharist.

Lastly, the sprinkling rite, described in *General Instruction* as an occasional alternative to the penitential rite especially appropriate during Easter time, has great potential for highlighting the presence of Christ in the assembly. Article 51 explains that the sprinkling rite is performed to recall baptism. The use of the symbol of water makes the sprinkling rite a particularly significant gesture since recalling each person's baptism ritualizes the basis for the assembly's coming together for worship and their identity as members of the Church. It is by reason of their baptism, that the assembly is charged with the commission to celebrate the Eucharist and be the presence of Christ in the world. It is possible that giving the sprinkling rite greater prominence by making it the preferred alternative could contribute significantly toward promoting the assembly's perception of itself as the presence of Christ.

[53] While the focus of this article is on postures in the gathering rite, it might be useful to note here that at least one of the reasons for the debate over the posture of the assembly for the eucharistic prayer stems from concerns over the perception of theological meaning. One perspective in the public debate over this issue proposed standing as a way to provide the assembly with a deeper sense of itself as embodying the presence of Christ. See John K. Leonard and Nathan D. Mitchell, *The Postures of the Assembly during the Eucharistic Prayer* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994) for a fuller treatment of this question.

CONCLUSION

By means of symbols, human beings negotiate their identity and their place within their world. While catechesis can assist in unpacking the many layers of meaning generated by symbolic activity, it cannot reverse or eliminate the confusion or contradictions that results from disregard for the power and meaning of symbols within the context of liturgical rites. If recognition comes more readily through symbolizing activity than discursive speech, then any attempt to promote the worshiping assembly's awareness of the presence of Christ in their midst can succeed more readily by attending with thoughtful care to how symbols are celebrated. Indeed, although contemporary developments in eucharistic theology highlight the primacy of Christ's presence in the gathered assembly, the gathered assembly itself may not have grown in that awareness. Perhaps this is because the symbolic network of current Catholic culture does not mediate such an awareness with sufficient clarity. Neither do recent Church documents provide the clarity needed to promote that awareness. None of this is meant to diminish the importance of love, reverence, and worship of Christ in the eucharistic species. Still less is this meant to diminish the importance of worthy tabernacles and appropriate spaces for prayer in the presence of the reserved sacrament. However, if the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is rooted in the presence of Christ in the Church, particularly the Church gathered for worship, a keener awareness and appreciation of that presence will not only enrich our eucharistic liturgies and deepen our eucharistic spirituality, but will also provide members of the Church with an understanding of their dignity as baptized members, particularly when they gather to celebrate the Eucharist. Inculcating the worshiping assembly with a keener awareness of the presence of Christ in their midst is not a dispensable or optional theological insight. The current situation in the Church, with its diminishing number of ordained ministers and increased instances of Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest, as well as the laity's growing awareness of their unique role in the Church, requires that the theological basis of the assembly's true identity be communicated clearly through the symbols celebrated in the liturgical rites.