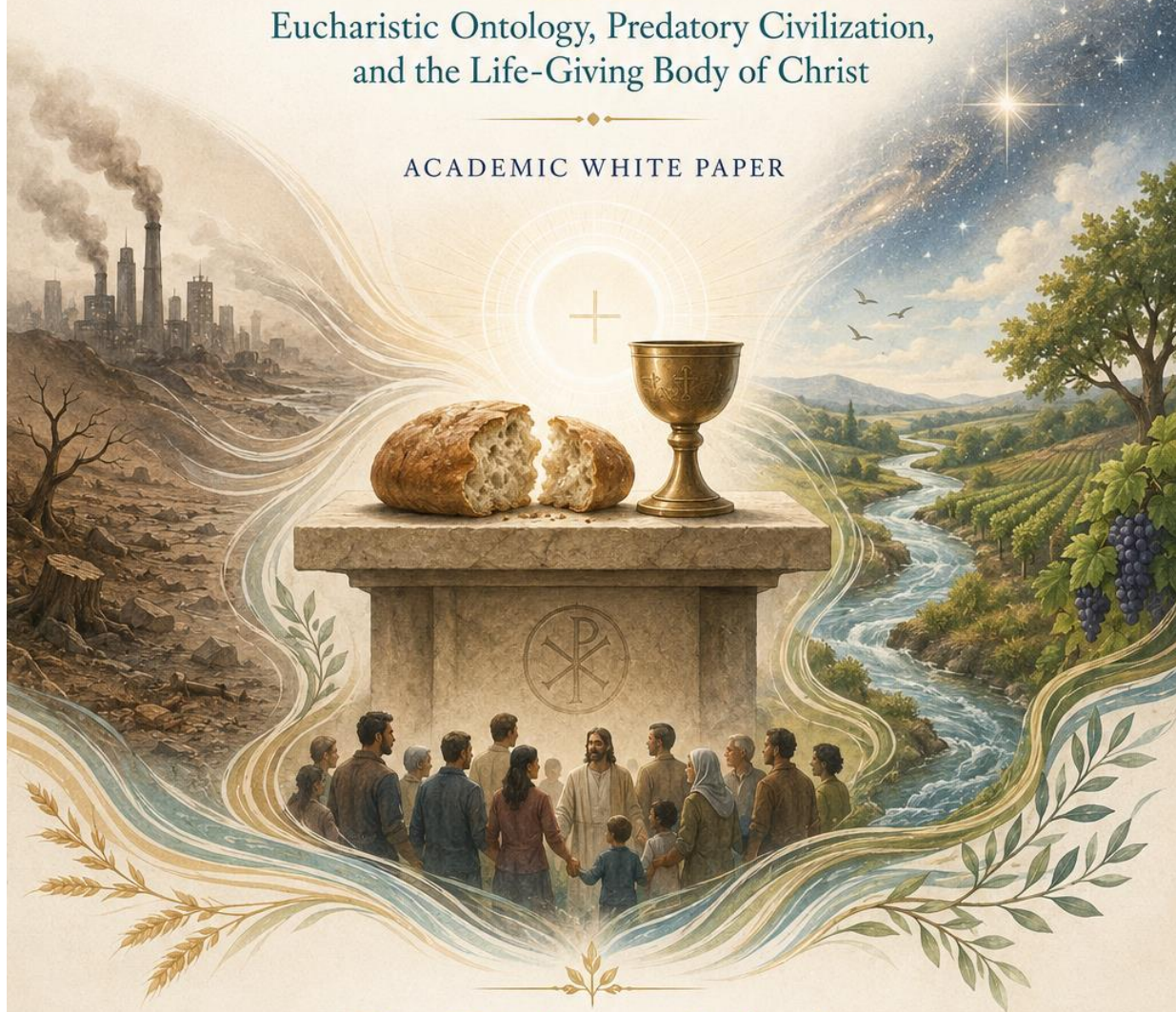




From Consumption to Communion

Eucharistic Ontology, Predatory Civilization,
and the Life-Giving Body of Christ

ACADEMIC WHITE PAPER



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With ChatGPT-5.5 Thinking

June 2026

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Academic White Paper

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With editorial and drafting assistance from ChatGPT-5.5 Thinking

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“The Eucharist reveals the true metabolism of reality: life is not possession but gift; body is not object but communion; eating is not devouring but thanksgiving.”

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Originating Liturgical Spark

This paper emerged from a Corpus Christi parish bulletin reflection on John 6:51-58. That reflection invited readers to see Eucharistic interconnectedness not as an abstraction, but as a concrete choice between destructive “eating flesh” and being drawn into Christ, whose intent is the ongoing life of the whole world (Immaculate Conception Co-Cathedral, 2026). The paper develops that seed into a wider theological and civilizational inquiry: What kind of world is Jesus bringing forth when he says, “I am the living bread”?

Abstract

This white paper proposes that the Eucharist is not only a central sacrament of Christian worship, but a profound revelation of the deepest structure of reality. Against modern civilizational systems organized around extraction, possession, commodification, and predatory consumption, the Eucharist discloses an alternative ontology: life as gift, personhood as communion, embodiment as sacred participation, and community as mutual indwelling. Beginning with the scandalous language of John 6, in which Jesus offers his flesh and blood as true food and true drink, the paper argues that Christ enters the symbolic field of violent consumption and reverses it from within. He does not overcome predation by becoming a stronger predator, but by becoming self-giving food for the life of the world (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], n.d.-a; Benedict XVI, 2007).

The paper develops the distinction between two modes of eating: destructive consumption, which absorbs the life of others into private or institutional self-maintenance, and Eucharistic communion, which receives life as gift and becomes life-giving in return. This distinction provides a theological grammar for diagnosing contemporary ecological, economic, social, technological, and institutional crises. Systems that consume bodies, labor, ecosystems, attention, trust, and futures operate according to an anti-eucharistic logic. By contrast, the Eucharist reveals a world in which economy means nourishment, power means service, creation is received as kin and gift, and community becomes the visible body of shared life.

The paper concludes that Eucharistic theology can contribute to a life-coherent civilizational framework without reducing the sacrament to metaphor, politics, or ecology. Precisely because the Eucharist is more than a social symbol, it has social, ecological, and civilizational consequences. To receive the Body of Christ is to be incorporated into a new order of being: one that unmask the predatory grammar of the old world and brings forth a communion-world ordered to the ongoing life of the whole.

Keywords

Eucharist; Corpus Christi; John 6; Body of Christ; sacramental theology; communion; predatory civilization; life-coherence; ecological theology; Catholic social thought; ontology; embodiment; mutual indwelling; gift; creation; social body

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1. Introduction: The Bread That Reveals a World

1.1 The Question Beneath the Sacrament

Every sacrament reveals more than it first appears to show. Water reveals birth, cleansing, death, and new life. Oil reveals healing, strengthening, consecration, and the Spirit's sealing presence. Marriage reveals covenantal communion. Reconciliation reveals mercy stronger than rupture. The Eucharist, however, reveals something still more elemental. It reveals the form of life itself.

Bread is taken. Blessing is given. Bread is broken. Bread is shared. A people receive. A body is formed. This sequence is so familiar within Christian worship that its radical meaning can become hidden by repetition. Yet in the Eucharist, the Church does not merely remember Jesus. It receives him. It does not merely symbolize unity. It is incorporated into his body. The Catechism identifies the Eucharist as the "source and summit" of the Christian life, the sacrament in which Christ is offered and received, and by which the Church is continually built up (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997, paras. 1324-1325).

The question, then, is not only what the Eucharist means within the sanctuary. The question is what kind of world the Eucharist reveals and brings forth. What does it mean to live in a world where God becomes food? What does it mean to receive life not as possession, but as gift? What does it mean for embodied persons to be joined not by contract, market, tribe, or ideology, but by the shared reception of one life? What does it mean to eat without devouring?

1.2 The Crisis of a Devouring Civilization

Modern civilization has become extraordinarily skilled at consumption. It consumes fossilized sunlight as energy, forests as timber, watersheds as infrastructure, soils as inputs, labor as productivity, bodies as service capacity, attention as monetizable data, and suffering as manageable cost. Its institutions often measure success by throughput, accumulation, expansion, compliance, market share, growth, and survival. Yet the living conditions upon which all human flourishing depends are weakened in the process.

The crisis is not merely that modern systems consume. All embodied life consumes. The deeper crisis is that consumption has been severed from communion, gratitude, reciprocity, limit, and care. Eating has become extraction. Use has become possession. Production has become abstraction. Growth has become a substitute for flourishing. The world is converted into material for systems that no longer know how to receive it as gift. McMurtry's life-value critique of global systemic disorder and Maturana and Varela's account of self-maintaining living systems both help illuminate how social orders can preserve their own operations while eroding the living field that sustains them (Maturana & Varela, 1980; McMurtry, 1999, 2011).

1.3 The Eucharistic Counter-Revelation

The Eucharist stands at the center of Christian life as a counter-revelation to this devouring order. It does not deny material need. It does not despise hunger. It does not escape embodiment. Instead, it enters hunger, embodiment, food, flesh, blood, table, and community, and reorders them from within.

Jesus does not give his followers an abstract theory of spiritual life. He says, "I am the living bread." He identifies himself with food. He declares his flesh true food and his blood true drink. He promises that whoever eats and drinks remains in him, and he in them (USCCB, n.d.-a, John 6:51-58). This language is not gentle religious poetry. It is earthy, offensive, and disorienting. It forces the hearer to confront the deepest questions of dependence, vulnerability, materiality, and participation.

1.4 Thesis

This paper argues that the Eucharist reveals an anti-predatory ontology of communion. In the self-giving Body and Blood of Christ, the destructive grammar of consumption is exposed, judged, and transfigured. Christ enters the world's logic of devouring flesh and reverses it from within: not by consuming others, but by giving himself as food for the life of the world.

The Eucharist therefore discloses two opposed modes of eating. The first is destructive consumption, in which the life of others is absorbed into private appetite, institutional survival, economic accumulation, or civilizational expansion. The second is Eucharistic communion, in which life is received as gift, shared in gratitude, and returned as life-giving participation in the Body of Christ. This distinction is not only devotional; it has theological, ecological, social, economic, and civilizational significance.

2. The Scandal of John 6: Flesh, Blood, and the Refusal of Abstraction

2.1 The Offense of Eucharistic Language

The Bread of Life discourse in John 6 is among the most provocative passages in the New Testament. Jesus does not merely claim to teach the way of life. He identifies himself as bread from heaven. He does not merely ask for moral imitation. He declares that his flesh is to be eaten and his blood to be drunk. He does not merely offer wisdom. He offers himself as food (USCCB, n.d.-a, John 6:51-58).

The offense of this language should not be softened too quickly. Within the Jewish scriptural world, blood belongs to life and is not to be consumed. Flesh, too, carries connotations of mortality, vulnerability, kinship, and sacrifice. To speak of eating flesh and drinking blood is therefore to enter a symbolic field charged with taboo, violence, sacrificial meaning, and embodied dependence. The USCCB notes that the verb used in John 6:54-58 can carry the sense of “munch” or “gnaw,” underscoring John’s emphasis on the reality of Jesus’ flesh and blood (USCCB, n.d.-a, John 6:54 note).

2.2 The Refusal of Disembodied Religion

The scandal of John 6 is also a refusal of disembodied religion. Human beings often prefer religion as idea, identity, moral code, aesthetic tradition, or institutional belonging. Such forms can be meaningful, but they can also remain external to the metabolism of life. One may admire Christ without being incorporated into him. One may discuss justice without becoming just. One may defend doctrine without becoming bread for the hungry. One may belong to an institution without entering communion.

Jesus’ Eucharistic language resists this distance. “Flesh and blood” indicates not a detachable component of the person, but the whole embodied life. Christ gives not an object alongside himself, but himself. The Eucharist is therefore not an instructional supplement to Christian life. It is participation in the self-giving life of Christ. This coheres with sacramental theology’s insistence that symbolic mediation is not merely subjective signification, but embodied participation in divine gift (Chauvet, 1995; Ratzinger, 1986).

2.3 Eating as Participation

Eating is one of the most basic acts of creaturely life. To eat is to acknowledge dependence. No organism is self-originating or self-sustaining. Every living being receives life from beyond itself. Human beings may conceal this dependence through wealth, technology, convenience, abstraction, and social distance, but eating reveals the truth: life is received.

The Eucharist takes this ordinary dependence and reveals its deepest form. In eating the bread of life, the Christian does not merely take in nourishment. The Christian participates in Christ. The act of eating is transformed from biological necessity into sacramental communion. John 6 makes this dependence explicitly theological: Jesus says that he lives because of the Father, and that the one who feeds on him will live because of him (USCCB, n.d.-a, John 6:57).

2.4 The Eucharist as Crisis of Decision

The scandal of John 6 places the hearer before a decision. Will one remain at a safe distance from Christ, accepting teachings that can be managed, interpreted, admired, or domesticated? Or will one enter the vulnerability of communion, where the self is nourished by another and transformed into a member of a body? This decision is not only individual; it is civilizational. Societies also decide how they will eat. They decide whether creation will be received as gift or consumed as resource. They decide whether bodies will be honored as persons or absorbed as labor. They decide whether power will protect life or feed upon it.

3. Flesh and Blood as Total Self-Gift

3.1 More Than Symbolic Association

To say that Christ gives his flesh and blood is to say that he gives himself wholly. The Eucharist cannot be adequately understood as a detached symbol pointing to a separate spiritual truth. Nor is it merely a communal meal that expresses human solidarity. It is the sacramental presence of the self-giving Christ. John Paul II's *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* emphasizes that the Church lives from the Eucharist and that the Eucharistic sacrifice is at the center of the Church's life and identity (John Paul II, 2003).

Modern consciousness often treats symbols as subjective meanings projected onto otherwise neutral matter. In such a framework, bread remains bread, wine remains wine, and religious meaning is added by human interpretation. Sacramental theology operates from a deeper vision. Matter is not spiritually empty. Creation is capable of bearing divine communication. Bread and wine can become the means by which Christ gives himself (Chauvet, 1995; Francis, 2015, para. 236).

3.2 The Whole Person Given

The phrase "flesh and blood" refers to the whole embodied person. Christ does not give a fragment of himself. He gives his life, his vulnerability, his obedience, his suffering, his body, his blood, his death, his resurrection, his relation to the Father, and his love for the world. In the Eucharist, the giver and the gift are one. Christ does not merely give bread. He is the bread. He does not merely authorize a memorial. He becomes present in the memorial. He does not merely nourish from outside. He abides within.

3.3 The Cross in the Meal

The Eucharist is inseparable from the cross. The bread is broken. The blood is poured out. The meal is not a denial of suffering, but its transfiguration. Christ's body is not given from a place of untouched power, but from a place of wounded love. In destructive consumption, the vulnerable body is taken by force, absorbed, used, and discarded. In the Eucharist, the vulnerable body is freely given in love, received in faith, and raised into communion.

This is why the Eucharist cannot be assimilated to ordinary consumption. The same outward grammar - body given, blood poured out, life consumed - is radically reversed in meaning. The cross exposes the devouring violence of the world; the Eucharist reveals that this violence is not the final word. The crucified one becomes the risen food of a new creation. Girard's analysis of sacrifice and mimetic violence provides one helpful account of how victim-making structures social order; the Eucharistic mystery reveals a divine refusal to let the victim remain merely the system's stabilizing object (Girard, 1977, 1987).

3.4 Self-Gift and Non-Domination

Christ's self-gift is not self-erasure, passivity, or divine weakness in the sense of incapacity. It is non-dominating power. The Eucharist reveals a form of power that does not need to possess in order to give life. It does not coerce. It invites. It does not overpower the communicant. It offers itself. It does not consume the receiver. It abides within the receiver so that the receiver may become more truly alive.

A Eucharistic community therefore cannot organize itself around domination while claiming to be formed by the self-giving Christ. The form of the gift must become the form of the body. Benedict XVI describes the Eucharist as the sacrament of charity in which Christ makes the gift of himself and continues to love "to the end" (Benedict XVI, 2007, para. 1).

3.5 Becoming What We Receive

The Eucharist is not only received. It forms. The communicant is drawn into the pattern of Christ's life: taken, blessed, broken, and given. This does not mean romanticizing suffering or seeking brokenness for its own sake. It means that life received from God is not to be enclosed within the self. It is to become available for the life of others. In patristic and

ecclesial tradition, the Eucharistic body and ecclesial body are inseparably related: the Church becomes the Body it receives (de Lubac, 2006; Zizioulas, 1985).

4. The Two Ways of Eating: Destructive Consumption and Eucharistic Communion

4.1 Eating as a Moral and Spiritual Grammar

Eating is never only biological. It is also moral, social, ecological, and spiritual. How a society eats reveals how it understands the world. Does it receive food as gift or commodity? Does it honor those who cultivate, prepare, transport, and serve it? Does it respect soil, water, animals, seasons, and limits? Does it feed the hungry? Does it waste what others need? Does it turn appetite into entitlement?

The Eucharist brings these questions into theological clarity. There is a way of eating that destroys, and there is a way of eating that communes. Destructive consumption occurs when the receiver treats the other as mere material for the self, without gratitude, reciprocity, reverence, limit, or responsibility to the whole. Eucharistic communion is receiving life as gift in such a way that the receiver becomes more capable of giving life.

4.2 The Destructive Eater of Flesh

The image of the destructive “eater of flesh” is deeply unsettling because it names a pattern found far beyond literal violence. To eat flesh destructively is to consume the life, vulnerability, labor, or suffering of another for one’s own continuation. It is to turn the living other into fuel. The bulletin reflection that seeded this paper explicitly contrasts this destructive eater of flesh with being drawn into Christ, whose intent is life for the whole world (Immaculate Conception Co-Cathedral, 2026).

Empires do this when they consume conquered peoples for tribute, labor, territory, and prestige. Economies do this when they consume workers’ time, bodies, and communities while externalizing harm. Institutions do this when they preserve their own procedures, status, or reputation at the expense of the persons they exist to serve. Digital systems do this when they convert attention, language, memory, and behavior into extractable value. Even religious systems can do this when they consume the faithful through fear, control, shame, or clerical self-protection.

4.3 Eucharistic Eating

Eucharistic eating has the opposite form. Here the communicant does not seize life but receives it. The gift is not possessed but welcomed. The receiver does not become an isolated owner of grace but a member of the Body. The nourishment received is not enclosed within private benefit but calls forth shared life. This is why Paul can say that because there is one loaf, “we, though many, are one body” (USCCB, n.d.-b, 1 Cor. 10:16-17).

4.4 Consumption Without Communion

The central pathology of modern civilization is not consumption as such, but consumption without communion. This occurs when the act of taking is severed from gratitude, reciprocity, limit, and shared life. Consumption without communion produces ecological devastation because creation is treated as inventory rather than gift. It produces economic injustice because workers are treated as cost centers rather than persons. It produces social fragmentation because neighbors are treated as competitors, consumers, voters, clients, or threats rather than members of a shared body.

4.5 Communion as the Healing of Appetite

The Eucharist does not shame hunger. Christ comes as food precisely because human beings hunger. The issue is not whether we hunger, but how hunger is formed. Hunger can become grasping, anxious, possessive, violent, and insatiable. Or hunger can become receptive, grateful, trusting, and open to communion. In the Eucharist, Christ heals appetite by becoming its true object. The liturgy forms this pattern through repetition: take, bless, break, give, receive, become. The body learns what the mind alone cannot master (Guardini, 1998; Pickstock, 1998).

THE TWO METABOLISMS

Two Ways of "Eating" Reality

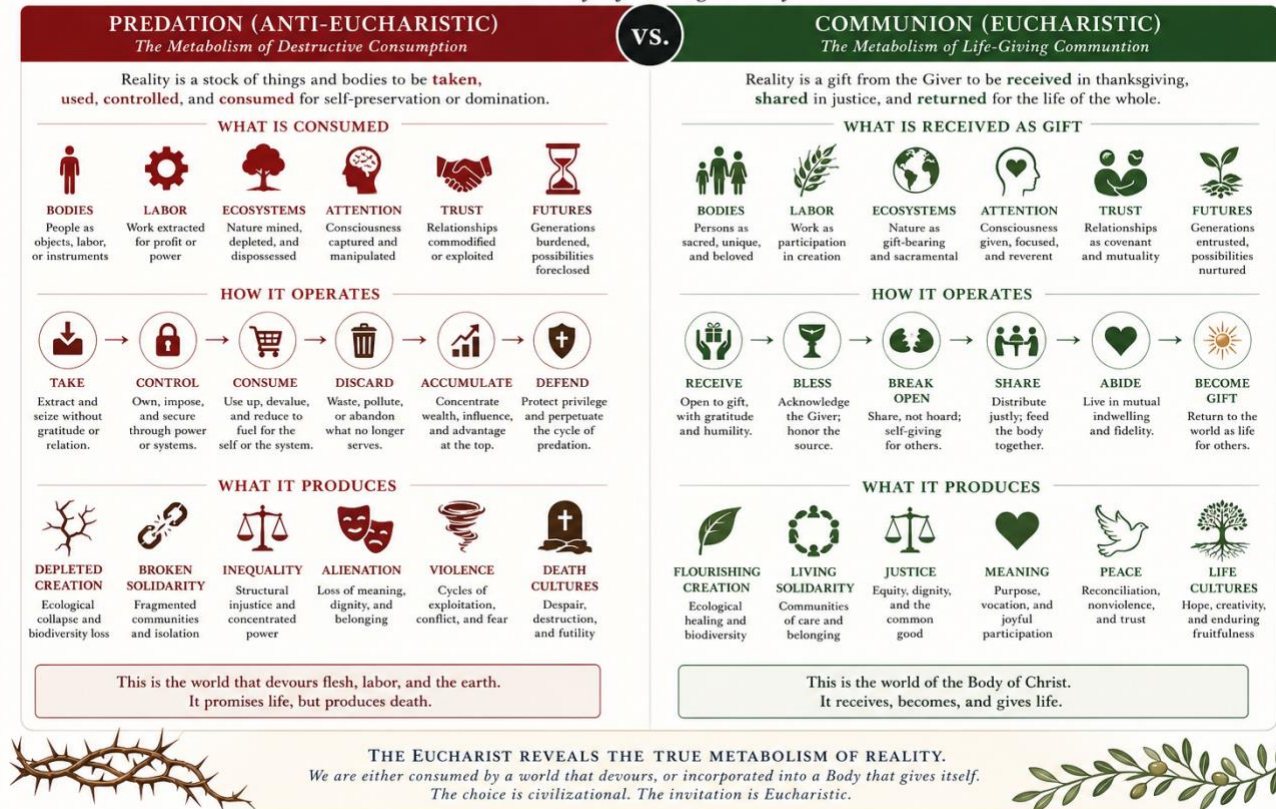


Figure 1. The Two Metabolisms: Predation and Communion

*Predatory civilization converts persons, labor, attention, and creation into fuel for private or institutional self-maintenance.
Eucharistic communion receives life as gift, blesses it, shares it, and returns it as nourishment for the whole body.*

5. Predatory Civilization as Anti-Eucharistic Order

5.1 From Personal Appetite to Systemic Consumption

The distinction between destructive consumption and Eucharistic communion cannot remain at the level of personal morality alone. Individuals eat, desire, possess, and consume, but so do systems. Economies consume. Empires consume. Institutions consume. Technologies consume. Legal orders consume. Even religious structures can consume. Once human appetite becomes organized into durable systems of accumulation, control, and self-preservation, destructive consumption becomes more than a vice. It becomes a civilizational architecture.

A predatory civilization is one in which the living world is increasingly treated as material for system expansion. The body becomes labor. The worker becomes productivity. The patient becomes throughput. The student becomes performance data. The citizen becomes a voter, taxpayer, consumer, demographic category, or security risk. The forest becomes timber. The river becomes infrastructure. Attention becomes monetizable capture. Language becomes content. Suffering becomes cost. McMurtry's critique of the money-sequence system illuminates how an order may convert life into means for system expansion, while Maturana and Varela's theory of autopoiesis illuminates the self-maintaining dynamics by which living and institutional systems preserve their organization (Maturana & Varela, 1980; McMurtry, 1999, 2011).

5.2 Institutional Autopoiesis and the Consumption of the Host

Living systems maintain themselves. Human institutions also tend toward self-maintenance. A hospital preserves its procedures. A corporation protects its market position. A legal system preserves its authority. A bureaucracy preserves its chain of command. A church institution preserves its structures of office, doctrine, liturgy, and discipline. Self-maintenance is not intrinsically evil; without coherent organization, institutions cannot serve. The danger arises when institutional self-preservation becomes detached from the living purposes that justified the institution in the first place.

At that point, the institution becomes parasitic upon its host. It consumes the very living field it was meant to serve. It may still possess legitimacy, metrics, funding, procedures, expertise, and public language of service, but its underlying metabolism has inverted. The living body becomes food for the system. This inversion is anti-eucharistic. In the Eucharist, Christ gives himself for the life of the body. In predatory institutionalism, the body is consumed for the continuation of the institution.

5.3 The False Eucharists of Modernity

Modern societies are not without liturgies. They have rituals of consumption, spectacles of belonging, cycles of sacrifice, and tables around which identities are formed. The shopping mall, the trading floor, the stadium, the political rally, the media feed, the corporate dashboard, and the digital platform all organize desire, attention, participation, and belonging. They teach people what to love, what to fear, what to pursue, and what to sacrifice.

These false liturgies often offer counterfeit communion. They gather bodies without forming mutual care. They stimulate appetite without healing desire. They produce identity without reconciliation. They generate participation without responsibility. They promise abundance while intensifying scarcity. They feed the self while starving the body. Liturgical theologians have long argued that worship forms a people; the critical question is therefore what forms of worship, spectacle, and repetition are actually forming our desires (Guardini, 1998; Pickstock, 1998; Schmemmann, 1973).

5.4 The Anti-Eucharistic Economy

An economy is not merely a system of production and exchange. It is a moral and spiritual formation of appetite. It teaches what counts as value, whose needs matter, what may be sacrificed, and what kinds of life are worth protecting. If the Eucharist reveals economy as nourishment, the dominant economy often reveals itself as organized hunger.

In an anti-eucharistic economy, accumulation replaces thanksgiving. Ownership replaces gift. Profit replaces nourishment. Efficiency replaces care. Scarcity is manufactured amid abundance. Workers are praised as essential while being rendered disposable. Creation is treated as externality until its degradation returns as crisis. Benedict XVI's

Eucharistic social teaching insists that the relationship between the Eucharistic mystery and social commitment must be made explicit; those who receive the Eucharist are compelled to become bread broken for others and to work for a more just and fraternal world (Benedict XVI, 2007, paras. 88-91).

5.5 The Anti-Eucharistic Body

Predatory civilization also deforms the body. It commodifies bodies through labor markets, medical systems, beauty industries, sexual exploitation, militarization, incarceration, surveillance, and digital profiling. The body becomes something to optimize, monetize, discipline, display, control, consume, or discard.

The Eucharist reveals another meaning of body. The body is not mere matter. It is not a machine. It is not a private possession sealed off from others. It is the place of relation, vulnerability, presence, suffering, joy, and communion. In Christ, body becomes self-gift. In the Church, many bodies become one body. In creation, materiality becomes capable of bearing divine life (Francis, 2015, para. 236; USCCB, n.d.-b, 1 Cor. 10:16-17).

5.6 The Anti-Eucharistic Relation to Creation

Predatory civilization treats creation as a storehouse of inputs and a sink for wastes. Its dominant questions are: What can be extracted? What can be sold? What can be built? What can be owned? What can be converted into growth? The Eucharist asks different questions: What has been given? What must be blessed? What may be shared? What must be protected? What does this created thing reveal about the generosity of God?

6. Eucharist as Anti-Predatory Reversal

6.1 Christ Does Not Devour the Devourers

The world of predation assumes that violence is overcome by superior violence, domination by superior domination, and threat by superior force. The strong survive by consuming the weak, and the threatened seek salvation by becoming stronger predators. The Eucharist reveals another power.

Christ does not defeat the devouring world by devouring it back. He does not become the final predator. He does not save by absorbing the life of others into himself. He saves by giving himself. He enters the place of the consumed, the sacrificed, the rejected, and the broken. Yet he does so freely, not as a passive victim of meaninglessness, but as the active revelation of divine love. The Lord who says, “This is my body, which will be given for you,” reveals self-gift as the form of divine power (USCCB, n.d.-c, Luke 22:19).

6.2 The Victim Becomes Nourishment Without Becoming Vengeance

Human history is full of victims whose suffering is consumed by others. Victims are used to build nations, justify wars, sustain myths, secure profits, maintain reputations, and fuel cycles of revenge. Christ’s victimhood is different. The crucified one does not return as vengeance. He returns as peace. He does not make his wounds into instruments of retaliation. He makes them the signs of forgiving love. In the Eucharist, the sacrificed one becomes nourishment, not because violence is good, but because divine love is able to transfigure violence without imitating it.

6.3 The Cross as Exposure of Predation

The cross exposes the predatory logic of the world. Religious authority, imperial power, public fear, political calculation, betrayal, abandonment, and mob violence converge upon the vulnerable body of Jesus. The innocent one is consumed by the machinery of order. The Eucharist keeps this exposure present. The body given and blood poured out are not sentimental images. They are the sacramental memory of what the world does to truth when truth threatens its arrangements. Cavanaugh’s political theology of the Eucharist is especially instructive here, showing how Eucharistic body-form resists the violence of bodies captured by the state or by coercive political orders (Cavanaugh, 1998).

6.4 The Resurrection as the Future of Consumed Life

The Eucharist is not only the meal of the crucified one. It is the meal of the risen one. This prevents the theology of self-gift from becoming a glorification of victimhood. Christ does not give himself into nothingness. His self-gift is received by the Father and returned as risen life. The resurrection declares that life given in love is not lost. The world may consume the body, but it cannot consume the life that is rooted in God.

6.5 The Eucharistic Pattern: Take, Bless, Break, Give

The Eucharistic action follows a pattern: take, bless, break, give. The world also takes and breaks. Predatory systems take and break in order to possess, use, and discard. In the Eucharist, however, taking is reception, blessing is thanksgiving, breaking is self-gift, and giving is communion. The difference lies in the form of relation. Predation takes what is not received as gift. Eucharist receives what is given. Predation breaks in order to dominate. Eucharist breaks open in order to share.

THE EUCHARISTIC REVERSAL

From Devouring Flesh to Self-Giving Body

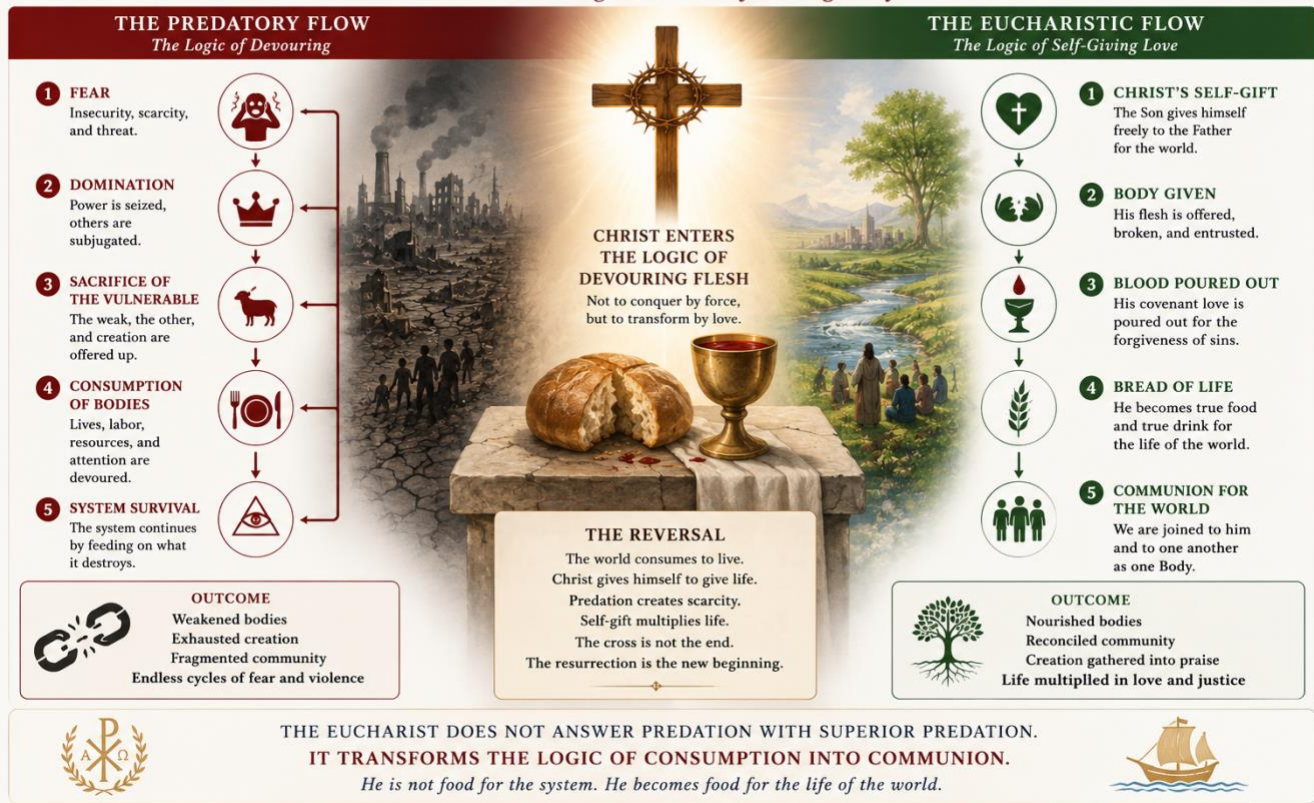


Figure 2. The Eucharistic Reversal: From Devouring Flesh to Self-Giving Body

The Eucharistic reversal does not answer predation with superior predation. Christ does not devour the devourers. He becomes self-giving food, transforming the logic of consumed flesh into the sacrament of life-giving communion.

7. Mutual Indwelling and the Social Body

7.1 “Remain in Me and I in Him”

The Eucharistic promise is not merely that the communicant receives benefit from Christ. It is that the communicant remains in Christ and Christ remains in the communicant (USCCB, n.d.-a, John 6:56). This language of abiding or mutual indwelling points toward a radical transformation of personhood. The modern self is often imagined as an autonomous unit: bounded, choosing, possessing, competing, expressing, and defending itself. Relationships are then added externally through contract, preference, identity, or utility. The Eucharist reveals a deeper anthropology. The person is not abolished, but fulfilled in communion.

7.2 Beyond Individualism and Collectivism

Eucharistic ontology transcends the opposition between individualism and collectivism. Individualism isolates the person and treats communion as optional association. Collectivism absorbs the person into the group, state, class, nation, or institution. Both distort the body. The Eucharist reveals personhood as relational without being absorbent. Zizioulas’ theology of personhood as communion and LaCugna’s insistence that Trinitarian doctrine bears directly on Christian life both help locate Eucharistic communion within a larger relational ontology (LaCugna, 1991; Zizioulas, 1985).

7.3 The Church as Eucharistic Body

The Church does not invent its unity. It receives it. The Eucharist forms the Church because the Church lives from the self-giving Christ. The Body of Christ on the altar and the Body of Christ gathered in worship are not identical in the same mode, but they are inseparably related. The sacramental body forms the ecclesial body. De Lubac’s historical retrieval of *Corpus mysticum* shows how Eucharist and Church cannot be separated without distorting both sacrament and ecclesial identity (de Lubac, 2006).

This means that the credibility of the Church depends upon Eucharistic congruence. Does the community’s life correspond to the body it receives? Does it welcome the poor? Does it reconcile enemies? Does it protect the vulnerable? Does it honor creation? Does it exercise authority as service? Does it feed both physical and spiritual hunger? Does it become bread for the world? Benedict XVI names this as “Eucharistic consistency,” linking Eucharistic faith to public, moral, and social responsibility (Benedict XVI, 2007, para. 83).

7.4 The Poor as Eucharistic Test

The poor reveal whether Eucharistic communion is real. If the Eucharist forms one body, then the hunger of one member concerns all. The poor are not external recipients of charity from a complete body. They are members whose suffering reveals the body’s fracture. A community that receives the Body of Christ while tolerating the abandonment of the poor has misunderstood the sacrament. The Eucharist does not permit a spirituality that separates love of Christ from love of Christ’s members.

7.5 Reconciliation as Bodily Repair

If the Eucharist forms one body, then reconciliation is not optional. Division is not merely disagreement. It is bodily wound. Hatred, resentment, exclusion, abuse, racism, class contempt, clericalism, family rupture, and political enmity all tear the social body. Benedict XVI links Eucharistic communion to reconciliation, dialogue, justice, and the transformation of unjust structures, insisting that the Eucharist must become in life what it signifies in celebration (Benedict XVI, 2007, para. 89).

8. The Cosmic Eucharist: Creation Gathered Into Thanksgiving

8.1 Bread and Wine as Creation and Culture

The Eucharist is celebrated with bread and wine, but bread and wine are not simple objects. They are dense with relations. Bread carries seed, soil, rainfall, sunlight, microbial life, cultivation, harvest, milling, kneading, baking, transport, memory, and table. Wine carries vine, earth, climate, pruning, harvest, crushing, fermentation, aging, celebration, and culture. Both are creation and human work joined.

When bread and wine are brought to the altar, creation is not left outside worship. It is gathered into offering. Human labor is not erased. It is taken up. The earth's fruit and the work of human hands become the sacramental medium of Christ's presence. Schmemmann's theological vision of the world as sacrament and offering is especially resonant here: the Eucharist reveals the world's vocation to become thanksgiving (Schmemmann, 1973).

8.2 Matter as Capable of Communion

The Eucharist reveals that matter is capable of communion. This does not mean that matter is divine in itself. It means that created reality can become the bearer of divine gift. Bread and wine do not cease to be creation; they become the sacramental presence of Christ by the power of God. This sacramental vision challenges both materialism and spiritualism. Against reductive materialism, it says that matter is not spiritually mute. Against disembodied spiritualism, it says that grace does not bypass matter.

8.3 Ecology as Eucharistic Responsibility

Ecological responsibility is often framed in terms of sustainability, survival, stewardship, or planetary management. These frames are important, but Eucharistic theology adds a deeper dimension: thanksgiving. The earth is not only the condition of survival. It is gift. To damage creation is not only imprudent. It is ingratitude embodied.

Laudato si' makes this point with remarkable force: in the Eucharist, all created things find their greatest exaltation; Christ reaches us through a fragment of matter; and the Eucharist joins heaven and earth, embraces all creation, and motivates concern for the environment (Francis, 2015, paras. 236-237). A Eucharistic ecology therefore begins with reception. Before calculation comes gratitude. Before management comes reverence. Before sustainability targets comes blessing.

8.4 The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor

The ecological and social dimensions of the Eucharist cannot be separated. The same predatory systems that consume creation often consume the poor first and hardest. Polluted water, degraded soil, unsafe housing, precarious labor, toxic exposure, climate vulnerability, and food insecurity are not randomly distributed. They follow lines of power. A Eucharistic community must therefore hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor as wounds of one body (Francis, 2015; Benedict XVI, 2007, paras. 90-92).

8.5 Cosmic Thanksgiving and the New Creation

The Eucharist anticipates the healing of all creation. It is not only memory of the Last Supper and participation in the sacrifice of Christ. It is also foretaste of the banquet of the kingdom. In it, creation's fragments are gathered, blessed, transformed, and shared. The world's destiny is not waste, but communion. To celebrate Eucharist is therefore to practice hope with matter. Bread and wine become signs that creation is not abandoned. Bodies are not abandoned. The poor are not abandoned. The dead are not abandoned. The future is not abandoned.

THE COSMIC-SOCIAL EUCHARIST

CREATION, LABOR, ALTAR, COMMUNITY, WORLD

The Eucharist gathers all things into Christ and sends us forth to be bread for the life of the world.



Figure 3. The Cosmic-Social Eucharist: Creation, Labor, Altar, Community, World

Bread and wine are not isolated ritual objects. They carry soil, water, sunlight, seed, vine, human labor, culture, memory, and table. In the Eucharist, creation and human work are gathered into Christ's self-giving and returned to the world as communion, justice, and praise.

9. Toward a Eucharistic Civilization

9.1 From Eucharistic Devotion to Eucharistic Form

The Eucharist is rightly adored, celebrated, guarded, and received with reverence. Yet devotion must become form. A Eucharistic civilization would not be one that merely multiplies religious symbols in public life. It would be one whose institutions, economies, technologies, and communities begin to reflect the pattern of the sacrament: receive, bless, break open, share, abide, and become life for others. Such a civilization cannot be imposed by domination, because domination contradicts the Eucharistic form. It must be grown through conversion, practice, community, policy, education, worship, and repair.

9.2 Economy as Nourishment

In a Eucharistic civilization, economy would be judged first by whether it nourishes life. Production, exchange, finance, property, and trade would be subordinate to the shared conditions of flourishing. Food, water, housing, healthcare, education, ecological integrity, meaningful work, and community belonging would not be treated as secondary outcomes of growth. They would be recognized as primary goods of the body. The Eucharistic question for economy is simple but radical: who is fed, who is consumed, and what happens to the body?

9.3 Power as Service

In a Eucharistic civilization, power would be judged by its capacity to serve life rather than secure domination. Christ's power appears as self-giving presence. Authority in the Church and in society must therefore be accountable to the vulnerable, transparent before truth, and ordered toward the common good. Power becomes anti-eucharistic when it consumes the body for its own preservation. Eucharistic power protects what is vulnerable, strengthens what is weak, heals what is divided, and gives itself for the life of the whole.

9.4 Knowledge as Participation

Modern knowledge is often organized as observation, measurement, prediction, and control. These modes have produced real insight and practical benefit. Yet when knowledge is severed from participation, humility, and care, it can become extractive. The knower stands outside the known, converts reality into data, and uses knowledge for manipulation. Eucharistic ontology suggests another form of knowing: participatory, reverent, embodied, and responsible. To know truly is not merely to represent the world accurately, but to enter right relation with it.

9.5 Technology as Mediation, Not Substitution

Technology mediates human action. It can extend care, communication, healing, memory, and cooperation. But technology becomes anti-eucharistic when mediation becomes substitution: when symbol replaces presence, data replaces person, efficiency replaces care, simulation replaces wisdom, and control replaces communion. The Eucharist resists technological substitution because it is irreducibly embodied. It involves gathered bodies, material elements, touch, taste, presence, memory, and communal participation.

9.6 Law as Protection of Communion

Law can serve communion by protecting the vulnerable, restraining predation, repairing wrongs, and establishing conditions for shared life. But law becomes anti-eucharistic when it protects order without justice, property without life, procedure without mercy, or authority without truth. A Eucharistic legal imagination would ask how law protects the body. It would understand justice not merely as rule enforcement, but as the restoration of right relation.

9.7 Church as First Sign, Not Final Possession

The Church must not speak of Eucharistic civilization as though it already fully embodies what it proclaims. The Church is called to be the first sign of Eucharistic life, but it remains in need of conversion. Its failures are especially grave because they obscure the sacrament it bears. A Eucharistic Church would be marked by reverent worship, truthful

memory, care for the poor, protection of the vulnerable, ecological responsibility, transparent authority, reconciliation across divisions, and formation in self-giving love.

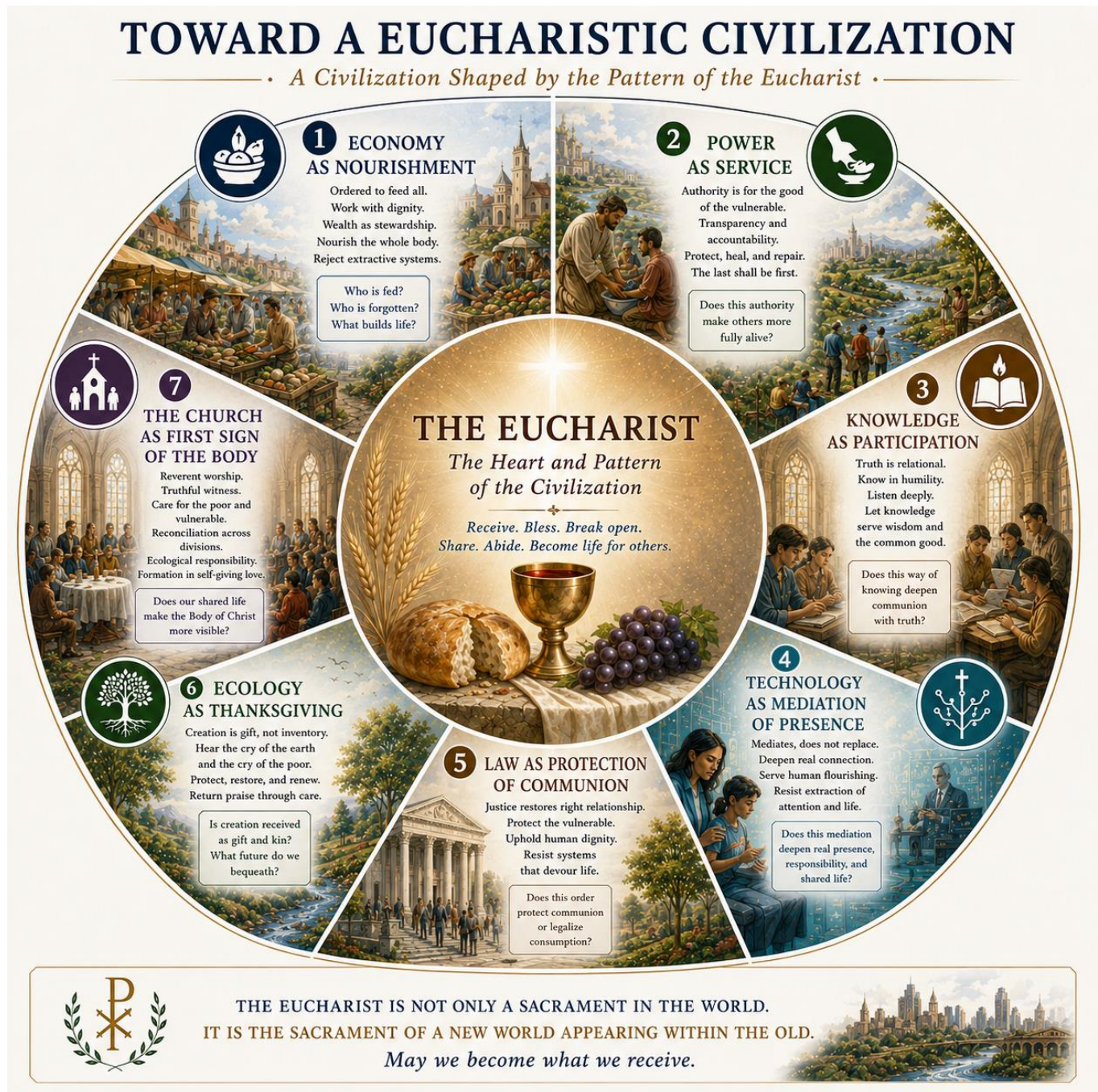


Figure 4. Toward a Eucharistic Civilization

A Eucharistic civilization is not a theocratic imposition or a symbolic overlay on existing systems. It is a life-form shaped by the Eucharistic pattern: receive, bless, break open, share, abide, and become life for others.

10. Conclusion: Becoming What We Receive

10.1 The World Hidden in the Bread

The Eucharist contains a world. At first glance, it appears as bread and wine on an altar, a ritual act within the Church, a sacred meal repeated across generations. But within this humble form is a complete reordering of reality. Life is gift. Body is communion. Matter can bear divine presence. Eating can become thanksgiving. Power can become service. The victim can become nourishment without becoming vengeance. The many can become one body without being erased. Creation can be gathered into praise. The world does not need to remain a field of predation. In Christ, a new world has already begun.

10.2 The Judgment of the Devouring World

The Eucharist judges every system that consumes life without becoming life-giving. It judges economies that sacrifice the poor to accumulation. It judges institutions that preserve themselves by consuming the people they exist to serve. It judges technologies that harvest attention while weakening presence. It judges politics that feed on fear and division. It judges religious forms that adore Christ in the host while neglecting Christ in the wounded body of the world. This judgment is not condemnation for its own sake. It is revelation for conversion.

10.3 The Invitation to Communion

The Eucharistic invitation is not merely “believe this doctrine,” though doctrine matters. It is not merely “attend this ritual,” though worship matters. It is not merely “act ethically,” though justice matters. The invitation is deeper: receive Christ, abide in Christ, become the Body of Christ, and live as food for the life of the world. To receive the Eucharist is to consent to a transformation of appetite, identity, belonging, and action.

10.4 The Life of the Whole

Christ gives his flesh for the life of the world (USCCB, n.d.-a, John 6:51). This phrase must not be narrowed. The world includes persons, communities, bodies, cultures, creatures, soil, water, air, memory, and future generations. The Eucharist is not a private escape from the world. It is God’s self-giving entry into the world’s hunger so that the world may live.

The life of the whole is not an abstraction. It is the child fed, the elder honored, the worker protected, the soil restored, the river cleansed, the prisoner visited, the enemy reconciled, the grieving accompanied, the disabled welcomed, the migrant sheltered, the community repaired, and the future kept open. A Eucharistic civilization would be measured by these signs - not by accumulation alone, institutional expansion alone, technological sophistication alone, or public religiosity alone, but by whether life is received, protected, shared, healed, and returned in thanksgiving.

10.5 Final Word: From Consumption to Communion

The devouring world says: take and live. Christ says: receive and become life. The devouring world says: consume the other before the other consumes you. Christ says: this is my body, given for you. The devouring world says: secure yourself by possession. Christ says: remain in me. The devouring world says: the weak are food for the strong. Christ says: the Lord becomes bread for the hungry.

The Eucharist is therefore not only a sacrament within the world. It is the sacrament of a new world appearing within the old. It is the bread that unmasks predation, heals appetite, forms communion, gathers creation, and brings forth a people capable of becoming what they receive. To live Eucharistically is to cross from consumption into communion. It is to let the Body of Christ become the form of the world.

Glossary

Anti-Eucharistic. A pattern of life, institution, economy, or culture that contradicts the form of the Eucharist by consuming life without gratitude, reciprocity, reverence, justice, or concern for the whole body.

Communion. A form of shared life in which persons remain distinct yet mutually indwell one another through love, responsibility, gift, and participation in Christ. Communion is not fusion, crowd identity, or institutional uniformity.

Destructive Consumption. The absorption of bodies, labor, ecosystems, attention, trust, or future possibilities into private appetite, institutional self-preservation, or systemic expansion without becoming life-giving in return.

Eucharistic Civilization. A social, ecological, economic, and ecclesial order shaped by the Eucharistic pattern of receiving life as gift, blessing it in thanksgiving, breaking open in self-gift, sharing for the life of the whole, and abiding in communion.

Eucharistic Consistency. The congruence between receiving the Eucharist and living in ways that publicly embody communion, justice, reconciliation, protection of life, and care for the common good.

Eucharistic Ontology. A vision of reality in which life is understood not primarily as possession, competition, or isolated autonomy, but as gift, communion, embodiment, mutual indwelling, and participation in the self-giving life of God.

Eucharistic Reversal. The transformation by which Christ enters the world's logic of consuming flesh and reverses it from within, not by becoming a stronger predator, but by becoming self-giving food for the life of the world.

False Eucharist. A counterfeit form of gathering, belonging, sacrifice, or shared identity that promises communion but produces rivalry, domination, exclusion, addiction, spectacle, or consumption.

Flesh and Blood. In the Johannine and Eucharistic context, the whole embodied person of Christ given in total self-gift, not an abstract idea or detachable symbol.

Life-Coherence. The alignment of personal, institutional, ecological, and civilizational arrangements with the continuing, recovering, and flourishing of life across persons, communities, species, and future generations.

Mutual Indwelling. The relational structure described by Christ's promise that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood remains in him and he in them. It names a communion in which persons do not disappear into one another but become more fully alive through participation in Christ.

Predatory Civilization. A civilization whose dominant institutions, economies, technologies, and cultural forms consume bodies, ecosystems, labor, attention, trust, and futures for self-maintenance, profit, control, or expansion.

Sacramental Matter. Created material reality capable, by divine action, of bearing grace, presence, blessing, and communion.

Appendix A: Eucharistic Diagnostic Questions

These questions translate the paper's theological argument into discernment tools for communities, institutions, and policy settings.

Questions for Personal Conversion

- Am I receiving life as gift or grasping it as possession?
- Where has my hunger become anxious, possessive, or destructive?
- Whose body, labor, attention, or vulnerability supports my comfort?
- Do I receive the Eucharist as private consolation only, or as incorporation into Christ's self-giving life?
- Where am I being invited to become bread for others?

Questions for the Church

- Does our parish life visibly correspond to the Body we receive?
- Are the poor treated as members of the body or as external recipients of charity?
- Do our structures protect the vulnerable or preserve institutional comfort?
- Does our Eucharistic worship lead to reconciliation, service, justice, and ecological responsibility?
- Are we forming consumers of religious services or members of Christ's Body?

Questions for Economy

- Who is fed by this economic arrangement?
- Who or what is consumed by it?
- Does it nourish the shared conditions of life?
- Does it turn persons into inputs, workers into costs, or creation into externality?
- Could this economy be blessed at the altar without contradiction?

Questions for Power and Governance

- Does this authority make others more fully alive?
- Does it protect vulnerable bodies?
- Does it repair communion or intensify fragmentation?
- Does it preserve the institution at the expense of the living body?
- Does it exercise power as domination or as service?

Questions for Technology

- Does this technology deepen real presence or substitute for it?
- Does it nourish attention or consume it?
- Does it strengthen embodied care or displace it?
- Does it serve communion, truth, and responsibility?
- What does this system consume in order to function?

Questions for Ecology

- Is creation being received as gift or treated as inventory?
- What soil, water, air, creatures, and communities are affected?
- Does this action return praise through protection and care?
- Are the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor being heard together?
- Does this practice belong to thanksgiving or extraction?

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