



## Service through Worship: Forming a Eucharistic Devotion for a Synodal Church

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### Służba poprzez uwielbienie: kształtowanie pobożności eucharystycznej dla Kościoła synodalnego

#### STRESZCZENIE

Synod papieża Franciszka na temat synodalności gromadzi Kościół powszechny w wokół kwestii rozeznawania drogi towarzyszenia, która ma na celu zajęcie się wspólnymi i pilnymi problemami w Kościele. Podczas gdy rozwija on teologię synodalności, niniejszy artykuł ukazuje, że fundamentalne znaczenie dla ścieżki synodalnej wymaga włączenia do tego procesu pobożności eucharystycznej. Ten liturgiczny mechanizm obejmuje bowiem dialog i uwielbienie między ludem a Bogiem z nadzieją, że wola Chrystusa objawi się dzięki łasce Ducha Świętego. Teologia eucharystii zawarta w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka i Benedykta XVI pokazuje, w jaki sposób kult integruje pożądaną jedność między Bogiem a bliźnim. W związku z tym to pobożność eucharystyczna wzmacnia rozmowy synodalne i podkreśla chrystocentryczną wizję, poszerzając zdolność Kościoła do rozeznawania, jak skuteczniej służyć. W szczególności *Dziennik duchowy* św. Ignacego z Loyoli zapewnia modlitewne i praktyczne spojrzenie, dzięki któremu Bóg może działać poprzez tę metodę rozeznawania eucharystycznego, aby pomóc w wypełnieniu woli Bożej wobec swojego ludu.

Słowa kluczowe: synodalność, Eucharystia, rozeznawanie, duchowość ignacjańska

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#### Introduction

On the 2nd of March 2018, the International Theological Commission published “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church.” The document hoped to offer “guidelines” in exploring a theology of synodality.<sup>1</sup> In this context, synodality refers to the People of God coming together in

<sup>1</sup> International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, Vatican City, March 2018, accessed 23 February, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_sinodalita\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html), 2.

assembly to take an active role in evangelization.<sup>2</sup> Part of its guidelines introduced a “Eucharistic synaxis” to illustrate both the full and active participation of its diverse members through worship to manifest the intended and desired unity with God and his Church; from that celebration, members better serve the Church’s mission under the careful instruction of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> This process moves from a liturgical celebration to communal discernment, inviting participants to incorporate humility and careful listening to the “groans of the Spirit.”<sup>4</sup> Since the commission’s publication, the synodal process moved from the local church and episcopal conference levels of the synod to the opening in Vatican City on the 9th of October 2021, with several members mentioning the recurring themes of listening and discerning.<sup>5</sup> The diocesan and episcopal phases collated the listening sessions from their perspective regions, which moved towards the creation of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, a synthesized document that sought to discern three areas: communion, co-responsibility in mission, and structures that allow participation in a synodal Church.<sup>6</sup>

Pope Francis’s homily at the first session’s closing liturgy highlighted a need for adoration and service as the Church continues the discerning, synodal path.<sup>7</sup> His invitation to the universal church mirrors a process recently implemented by the synodal participants. This intermediary waiting period between the closing of the first session and the beginning of the second in October 2024 marks a time of deeper reflection for the synod participants and the dissemination and continuing work of the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

Church documents attempting to formulate a theology of synodality recognize the importance of the Eucharistic synaxis and discernment. St. Paul refers to Eucharistic synaxis as the celebration of the Eucharist presided by the bishop gathering the different ministerial officers around him “in mu-

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, 70a.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 114. The commission’s movement from Eucharistic synaxis to communal discernment provides a spiritual guide for the Church as a holistic organism and its individual members. The details of this plan are worth exploring more in detail, but for the sake of this article, I am only highlighting its important elements.

<sup>5</sup> The recurring theme of discernment appeared in the message by Cardinal Mario Grech, General Secretary for the Synod of Bishops and Pope Francis’s homily at the Synod’s opening, [https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/document/common/opening/1.-BENVENUTO\\_Card.-Grech\\_IT.pdf](https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/document/common/opening/1.-BENVENUTO_Card.-Grech_IT.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, “Instrumentum Laboris for the First Session”, Vatican City, October 2023, <https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/0410/ENG-MODULE-A-WORKSHEET.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Francis, *Homily at the Closing of the Synod* for 29 October 2023, accessed 6 February, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2023/documents/20231029-omelia-conclusion-sinodo.html>

tual service to the praise and glory of God.”<sup>8</sup> Prayer and adoration are forms of service that shape personal piety and apostolic activities. In practice, the process moves from a period of prayer (personal devotions and communal worship) towards the interactive element of discerning with community members. Consequently, Eucharistic synaxis is not only for the synodal participants but for all members of the Church. This paper focuses on the impact of sacramental devotion to worship, its contribution to the overall vision of the Eucharistic synaxis, and its effects on the synod.

Establishing definitions for devotion and discernment is key. A Thomistic view of devotion is an “act of the will...for the service of God.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, devotion belongs to charity to offer oneself to God through a “union of the spirit” and is a religious act given to God in Divine worship.<sup>10</sup> Eucharistic devotion sees the rite as more than a communal gathering of praise or a personal act of piety, but as a sacrificial offering of worship that is service itself. The fruits of that service form a harmonious relationship with God and among the faithful. This harmony imparts spiritual knowledge to aid with evangelization. Since the early Church, “the Eucharist underpinned the formulation of the Church’s doctrine because there were most of all was the mystery of faith encountered and celebrated.”<sup>11</sup> The communal celebration was not only a social encounter but an event infused by grace through the “gift of the Holy Spirit through the paschal mystery.”<sup>12</sup> Eucharistic devotion serves the mission of the Church as the body comes to understand God’s will. This essay does not discuss the ongoing synodal process among the elected participants and its use of communal discernment. Still, it provides insights into how liturgical theology through the perspectives of the most recent pontificates of Benedict XVI and Francis and the *Spiritual Diary of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* can be an effective means of reaching the intended goal of the synodal process, which is an informed discernment. The temptation to reduce the synodal process to a democratic process dissipates when the initiating factor of God’s loving communication reveals the pastoral plan through worship, reflection, and discernment. Through this divine love, the Body of Christ listens attentively in faith and trust and gains spiritual knowledge that benefits the whole Church.

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<sup>8</sup> *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 25. The current synod amplifies St. Paul’s synodal understanding to include all the baptized to participate in the synodal process.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Fathers of the English Dominican Province* (trans.), *The Summa Theologica* (London: Forgotten Books, 2018), IIaIIae q. 82. A.1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, IIaIIae q. 82. A. 2.

<sup>11</sup> International Theological Commission, “Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church”, Vatican, 2014. Accessed 10 March, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20140610\\_sensus-fidei\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html), 75.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 14.

The spiritual knowledge gained goes through an interior process of discernment. There is a distinction between the primary goal of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which seeks and follows God's will, and the discernment of spirits, which is an Ignatian method of understanding one's religious experience through affect, meditation, contemplation, and other forms of prayer to cipher through movements of consolation and desolation. Ignatian discernment primarily involves seeking and finding God's will by navigating through the "spirits" while acknowledging one's limitations and desires to arrive eventually at an election, confirming a potential course of action towards greater praise and service to God.<sup>13</sup>

Pope Francis's desire for a synodal church underscores a Eucharistic devotion, which primarily prioritizes a union with God. Consequently, a deepened personal and communal devotion results in a more proactive, prophetic Church due to the liturgy's ability to encourage listening, silence, and reflection—all traits essential to minimize the Christian's ego and carefully follow God's will. In the Eucharistic celebration, this union with God brings the Church together. Through shared communion, the Church can see more clearly a revealed ecclesial vision through the guidance of pneumatic grace.

With a slightly different emphasis than his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI (then Cardinal Ratzinger)<sup>14</sup> similarly highlighted a disposition of self-sacrifice and kenosis, which imitates the salvific act initiated by Christ. For Ratzinger, participation in sharing the one chalice opens an opportunity to encounter God and neighbor. On one hand, Ratzinger prioritizes the idea of "sacrifice" and the initiative of God to inspire and motivate neighbors toward love, and Francis highlights the social and spiritual consequences of liturgical worship, which open the senses to God and neighbor. This paper seeks to see the complementarity and fruition of these two perspectives alongside the *Spiritual Diary of Ignatius of Loyola*. The 16<sup>th</sup>-century mystic exhibited genuine trust and piety towards Christ and displayed self-awareness, demonstrating his capacity to wade patiently through the complex waters of discernment. The result produced spiritual insights and divine confirmation that formalized the Society's governing statutes on temporal goods and apostolic way of proceeding. The spiritual knowledge gained through his Eucharistic mystical experiences increased his capacity to govern well, which proved efficacious for the Society of Jesus. Time, circumstance, and religious vocation are some of the factors that can shine doubt or distance from this spiritual text. Yet, Ignatius's method of discernment remains rele-

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<sup>13</sup> "Discernimiento" in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, 2 vols, 2nd ed. Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007, 607.

<sup>14</sup> For greater clarity and precision on his work and reference, I will refer to Pope Benedict XVI as Joseph Ratzinger, given that the work referenced in this article deals with a publication he did before his pontificate.

vant for contemporary audiences, particularly the synod that seeks to serve the Church. If devotion is an act of the will in service to God, developing this type of devotion will serve the purposes of synodality and build great union within the Church. Additionally, understanding liturgical theology and praxis as sources of Eucharistic devotion is essential to Christian life. Therefore, the Eucharistic theologies of Ratzinger and Francis will show how worship and devotion shape a spiritual disposition necessary for synodal discussions, and the *Diary* will highlight a connection between liturgical worship and apostolic service.

The fundamental thread of synodality follows a dialectic method with God in worship and with the self through a conducive engagement space. In the liturgical dialogue, Christ communicates himself to the members of his body, guiding them towards salvation. Worship makes authentic listening and ecclesial transformation possible when the Church finds her identity devoted and focused on God's divine love. The primary dialogue between God and the people helps inform the secondary dialogue among the faithful. Liturgical worship does not guarantee skillful listening nor definitive solutions to contemporary sociological or theological issues. However, the engagement of the faithful and their earnest entrance into worship is a service to the Church because it diminishes the ideological motivations of the ego and seeks a genuine union with God.

### **1. Pope Francis's vision is to return to the "taste of the bread" – a Eucharistic experience of love for Jesus and neighbor.**

Pope Francis continues to diagnose contemporary society as distracted, restless, shortsighted, and noisy, with the tendency to find immediate satisfaction in "attracting the attention of the other, that produces the most immediate response possible."<sup>15</sup> His sacramental theology, particularly on the Eucharist, highlights how Christ continually calls people to recognize the contemporary social realities and work towards justice. A three-tiered approach to encountering God involves wonder, silence, and sharing in the divine sight of God's vision of reality. Eucharistic discernment involves cultivating humility, creating space for silence, and recognizing God's invitation to serve. This section does not exhaust Pope Francis's theology on the Eucharist. However, it emphasizes dominant themes that continue to emerge from his writings and homilies.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Francis, "Address to the Participants in the General Chapter of the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters of the Holy Family", Vatican, September 2022, accessed 24 February, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/september/documents/20220926-cappuccine-sacrafamiglia.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Anna Woźnica's article "Sacramento-logic of Pope Francis" (*Studia Bobolanum*: 33, 1 [2022]: 5-20) explores the pope's anthropological application of sacramental signs in human

### **1.1. Awe and wonder for the Lord**

Pope Francis sees society's glorification of riches and desire for self-reliance as obstacles to recognizing God and neighbor. Such obstacles become an "abyss" people dig into, resulting in loneliness and depression. They can only be resolved when the Church "kneels before the Eucharist and worships with awe," for they are not only bowing before God but bending towards "compassion and tenderness before" the wounded.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, "Worship is the prayer of adoration; let us rediscover it: it frees us and restores us to our dignity as sons and daughters, not slaves."<sup>18</sup> This call to freedom in Christ reflects his Ignatian heritage; it is a call to cultivate a spiritual indifference towards created things in recognition of our proper "ends": to "praise, reverence, and serve God" to save our souls and to more clearly instantiate the *Imago Dei* in the fullness of our being.<sup>19</sup> This spiritual freedom is necessary to break a certain blindness toward recognizing God and understanding the self. Fear "leads to selfish egocentrism, and it paralyzes us... it detracts from the relationship with God as well as from adoration."<sup>20</sup> Pride causes a self-induced paralysis that inhibits the ability to know one's telos.

Blind adoration is another form of self-worship and fear. It can manifest as narrow rubricism or apathy to reverent adoration. True worship requires radical self-awareness to see God's loving action.

In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love... The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, "creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself."<sup>21</sup>

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nature and does not specifically address the seven sacraments. Her analysis provides some references to the Eucharist. This article seeks to address that sacrament more specifically.

<sup>17</sup> Francis, "Homily at the Pastoral Visit to Matera for the conclusion of the 27th National Eucharistic Congress for September 25th, 2022", accessed 4 February, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2022/documents/20220925-omelia-matera.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Ignatius Loyola, Santiago Arzubialde and José García de Castro (eds.), "Principio y fundamento" in *El Autógrafo de los Ejercicios espirituales* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2022), 163.

<sup>20</sup> Francis, "Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae for May 15th, 2015", accessed 21 October, 2023, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2015/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie\\_20150515\\_no-fear.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2015/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20150515_no-fear.html).

<sup>21</sup> Francis, "Laudato Si'", Vatican City, May 24, 2015, accessed 4 February, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 236.

The kenotic act relieves us of our ego-induced blindness, clearing our field of vision to see God properly. One cannot recognize God's plan without first seeing him. For Francis, fear prohibits any possible opportunity for a true encounter with God. Without addressing it, blind adoration becomes a coping mechanism.

### **1.2. An invitation to silence**

Pride and vanity contradict the Trinitarian love celebrated in the liturgy because man's worship is self-referential. His voice becomes an echo chamber, diminishing the possibility of dialogue. The liturgical act of worship involves movement, speech, and deep listening. Francis defines silence during the liturgy as preparation to listen to other voices, particularly the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> Before the celebrant prays the Collect, the rubrics designate a moment of silence for those present to call to mind their petitions and to center themselves before God.<sup>23</sup> This private prayer draws upon Francis' Ignatian formation of the *Examen*, which identifies God's movement throughout the day. The reflective pause before the Collect is a dialectic exercise: the person manifests a desire to open himself up to the Holy Spirit, and in return, the Spirit communicates in silence.

Synodal discernment must include this disposition of silence to allow God's communication to be heard and felt. Humility combats pride and minimizes the ego and ideological tendencies that distract and destroy the Christian's effort "to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ep 4,3). If not properly tended, the ego becomes reactive and defensive rather than receptive and reflective. Francis attributes defensive reactions to the tempter, who exploits the person's tendencies towards shallow and empty desires.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, silence provides space for an encounter with Christ. Thus, Francis not only encourages but *mandates* the necessity of liturgical silence.

When observed, liturgical silence becomes an active space of union and listening. As Francis describes, it is a "symbol of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, who animates the entire action of the celebration."<sup>25</sup> The power of the symbol can perform a "multifaceted action," evoking sorrow

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<sup>22</sup> Francis, "General Audience, 10 January 2018", accessed 24 February, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2018/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180110\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180110_udienza-generale.html).

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Francis, "General Audience, 5 October 2022", accessed 24 February, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2022/documents/20221005-udienza-generale.html#:~:text=Prayer%2C%20not%20like%20parrots%2C%20but,Knowing%20oneself>.

<sup>25</sup> Francis, "Desiderio Desideravi", 29 June 2022, accessed 24 February, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html), 52.

for sins and a desire for conversion.<sup>26</sup> The discernment concerning apostolic mission rests in acting from a place of receptive reflection, not a defensive reaction. From a place of reflection, the Church can act responsibly and boldly because it is open to being “reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love” and to grow from “the immense riches of God’s word.”<sup>27</sup> Francis’s recent call to more in-depth liturgical formation in *Desiderio Desideravi* highlights the Church’s call toward sacramental union with God and neighbor. By prioritizing this catechetical effort, Francis recognizes the liturgy’s role in a Christian’s life and the Church. As members walk the synodal path, they journey with the Spirit’s guidance towards greater clarity in vision and openness of heart for Christ. Consequently, love opens the senses to engage one’s neighbor with charity and empathy. This tendency becomes a compassionate act toward prophetic and evangelical justice working for reconciliation in a broken world.

### **1.3. Seeing reality with the eyes of Christ**

Adoration breaks the ego’s hold on the self and moves it towards praise and reverence to God. Silence opens the ears of the believer to listen attentively to God through the prayers of the liturgy, the preaching of the priest, and the responses of the faithful. The communal nature of liturgical worship binds the members of Christ as one body through the grace of the Holy Spirit, as he shepherds them towards greater peace and interior freedom to believe more deeply in the divine reality celebrated in their midst. For Francis, the liturgical reality embodied in the sending forth of *Ite Missa Est* is a missionary option that drives the believer from reflection to action.

This missionary option of the Church involves a necessary element of inclusion and openness, which imitates Christ’s example. These attributes, grounded in a Christocentric focus, eliminate a toxic “ecclesial introversion” that only seeks to maintain levels of superficiality and self-absorption.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, what has been seen, experienced, and received in the liturgical ritual impels the community towards evangelization. This is the extension of the evangelical dimension of the liturgy, in which the encounter with Christ through every word and gesture of the sacramental celebration moves the person from a place of worldliness and self-obsession to an outward missionary posture focused on the poor.<sup>29</sup> Fidelity to the Gospel means becoming active agents of God’s kingdom through loving service. Christian service

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 52.

<sup>27</sup> Francis, “*Evangelii Gaudium*”, Vatican City, 24 November 2013, accessed 24 February, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), 40.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 27-28.

<sup>29</sup> Francis, “*Desiderio Desideravi*”, 11.



includes a life of earnest prayer, by which the Spirit communicates spiritual knowledge to help the discernment process toward fulfilling God's will and building the kingdom.

The liturgy is not simply a passive exercise. In it, the faithful experience and live the Paschal Mystery. The liturgy unifies the members of the Church, both with one another and with Christ. Ironically, the debate over the ritual causes more division than its intended goal of unity.

Consequently, Francis challenges the faithful to safeguard the beauty and reverence of the liturgy and allow the spiritual graces of the Eucharist to flow naturally through faith and good works. The discernment of the Church in choosing to see this truth and beauty is only possible when her members understand the purpose by which Christ calls his disciples into a "sacrifice pleasing to the father, in the fraternal communion of sharing, of hospitality, of service."<sup>30</sup> True adoration draws attention away from the self, silence encourages active listening, and the Eucharist enhances the sense of engaging one's neighbor. Worship is not the primary step in service to the Church. It is service itself because members of the Body express a faithfulness in humble submission and admiration for the Eucharistic sacrifice. This disposition unites them with God and allows the graces of the Holy Spirit to influence prudence needed for a synodal dialogue.

## **2. "Eucharist – Communio – Solidarity Joseph Ratzinger's vision for Christian transformation**

In his 2002 lecture to the Eucharistic Congress in the Diocese of Benvenuto, Ratzinger provided a three-pronged approach to understanding the central link between the Eucharist and the foremost commandment to love one's neighbor. For Ratzinger, worship is fundamentally anthropological. Additionally, through an informed and intentional liturgical disposition for worship, grace propels a Christian toward acts of charity and justice, as well as inspired to imitate Christ's example. Thomas Dalzell explores Ratzinger's emphasis on the vertical versus the horizontal axis, analyzing his Augustinian roots to understand his theological approach.<sup>31</sup> According to Dalzell, Ratzinger does not ignore the horizontal axis (addressing temporal matters) nor advocate neo-Platonic escapism from the world. He speaks about faith and reason and how the incarnate Logos "is not only God's wisdom but God's love, which moves us to love others."<sup>32</sup> The harmonious bal-

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 65.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Dalzell, "Eucharist, Communion, and Orthopraxis in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78, 2 (2013):103-122.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, 122.

ance between the horizontal and the vertical is essential. Overemphasizing one over the other dilutes the ritual's original intentions of worshipping God. This work highlights Ratzinger's eucharistic thought as it contributes to liturgical discernment connected with the synodal approach.

### **2.1. Eucharist**

For Ratzinger, the semantic difference between *supper* and *eucharist* underlines a vital distinction between the fraternal banquet and the sacerdotal act of Christ. The concept of banquet and meal is prominent within the Passover meal, but it was not the meal itself that Christ wanted his disciples to repeat.<sup>33</sup> Instead, it is the focus on the blessing and the “great prayer of praise” in the Institutional narrative, which signals a trifold transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>34</sup> The great prayer is ultimately one of “thanks to God” because the “death of the Redeemer and the death of us all—has been transformed by an act of love into the gift of life.”<sup>35</sup>

While gratitude may be given for shared companionship in a sacred meal, the more incredible mark of praise is Christ's initiating act of sacrifice modeled for the apostles to go and do likewise. The emphasis on sacrifice is fundamentally tied to eschatology, which orders the person toward the Cross; therefore, the true meaning of God's liberating power must not be muddled or replaced with the idea of a feast.<sup>36</sup> Ratzinger does not negate the attractive quality of a shared meal among God's people. His apprehension regarding the overemphasis of the sociological element of a “gathering of people” wrongly redirects attention away from the focus of the proper disposition of sacrificial worship—the right liturgical approach to Christ's sacrifice.

### **2.2. Communio**

The transformation of the Christian heart consequently transforms the Church. In this section regarding *communio*, Ratzinger bristles at Kung's equivalence of *ekklesia* and *concilium*, which he defined as an instrument “to call together” to deliberate and act as “God's councilors.”<sup>37</sup> Instead, Ratzinger returns to the “communal,” invoking a more Eucharistic

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Eucharist—Communio—Solidarity”, in *Joseph Ratzinger's Theology of Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 357.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, 358.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration”, in *Joseph Ratzinger's Theology of Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 322.

<sup>37</sup> Ratzinger, “Eucharist—Communio—Solidarity,” 359.

“understanding of the Church in the most intimate encounter between Jesus and mankind, in his act of giving himself to us.”<sup>38</sup>

The processional image presents an ecclesiological paradigm rooted in the members of the Church moving towards the celebration and reception of communion. Again, he emphasizes the vertical axis, warning that overstating the horizontal reduces the Eucharist towards “self-determination within a community on a wide scale.”<sup>39</sup> Ratzinger’s perception of an autonomous community sidelines the transformative sacrifice of Christ, which distracts from recognizing the purifying element of the Passion that necessarily humbles the members into becoming a transformed Church.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Ratzinger’s attention to the vertical requires the transformation of the self, which binds the Christian community together *through* Christ.

The universal approach prioritizes the unification of the cosmic liturgy. Ratzinger does not see the Church as a “loose confederation of communities” organized within a centralized governing structure; rather, the Eucharist is the “full intimacy of the union of each individual with the Lord that it automatically becomes also a social sacrament in the highest degree.”<sup>41</sup>

### **2.3. Solidarity**

Given its ties to Marxist ideology, the third theme of the conference, solidarity, is associated with an economic model whose sole interest is the confrontation of world power and economic interest.<sup>42</sup> In practice, this philosophy has become a cautionary tale of what happens to social justice without clear theological foundations; the term solidarity becomes a mere political tool. Such an interpretation radically differs from the theological solidarity firmly rooted in Ratzinger’s preference for the vertical axis. While there is a need to improve societal and government structures for the sake of the Gospel, orthopraxis cannot be a precursor to orthodoxy.

If solidarity demands justice, this value can only be seen and imitated through Christ, manifesting in the transformed Christian. In his previous work on the Sabbath, he connects this with the imitation of and obedience to God to make this day holy, which he claims is a “participation in God’s freedom” and a reflection of Israel’s liberation from slavery.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 360.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, 361.

<sup>40</sup> Ratzinger, “»Built from Living Stones«: The House of God and the Christian Way of Worshipping God,” in *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theology of Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 377.

<sup>41</sup> Ratzinger, “Eucharist-Communio-Solidarity,” 363.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, 365.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Resurrection as the Foundation of Christian Liturgy”, in *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theology of Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 198.

Ratzinger's theological emphasis on the vertical axis does not detract from the horizontal in this Eucharistic exegesis to the delegates. However, it claims that the horizontal effects are only possible when the primary relationship between God and man duly infuses orthodoxy into orthopraxis through proper praise and glory to Christ's kenotic and redemptive act. His wariness of overemphasizing the horizontal dimension, particularly with the proverbial usage of *supper*, *consilium*, and *solidarity*, stems from concerns that it dampens and cheapens the redemptive nature of Christ's sacrifice, which results in addressing short-sighted societal views and tempers. Despite an apparent ideological divide between the Eucharistic emphasis of Francis and Ratzinger, both advocate submission to Christ and acknowledge that certain spiritual graces occur through the Eucharistic sacrifice. While a cursory reading may result in seeing only the division, the unity of both perspectives comes to light in the *Spiritual Diary of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, which displays Ratzinger's focus on the redemptive to see reality through God's grace, as Francis writes.

### 3. The *Spiritual Diary of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*

The *Spiritual Diary* is a written account of Ignatius of Loyola's movements in prayer during an intentional period of discernment between 1544 and 1555 as the Society's first Superior General.<sup>44</sup> At first glance, it can be seen as a model of piety, obedience, and devotion<sup>45</sup> from a 16th-century figure attempting to confirm his decision on a particular juridical matter concerning poverty to codify constitutional norms of his nascent religious order.<sup>46</sup> Some may readily dismiss its relatability due to its profound mystical nature. This document chronicles his journey towards confirming a prac-

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<sup>44</sup> The "Diary" was published nearly 400 years later by A. Codina in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, vol 63, (Rome, 1934), 86-158. The original text was in Spanish, but all quotations from the Diary will be from the English translation by Simon Decloux, *The Spiritual Diary of St. Ignatius: Text and Commentary* (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualis, 1990).

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Staab recently completed his doctoral dissertation regarding the theme of "devotion" in the *Diary*. In this work, he investigates Ignatius's spiritual movements within the text. His work connects the idea of *devotion* with the larger spiritual theology of Ignatius's context. While he analyzes the role of the Eucharist within Ignatius's text, he focuses primarily on Ignatius's devotion throughout these movements and does not focus on the liturgy's effects on Ignatius. Christopher Staab, "»An abundance of devotion« [De 1] A Study of Devotion in the *Spiritual Diary* of Ignatius of Loyola" (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2022).

<sup>46</sup> The *Spiritual Diary* was not the first time Ignatius used the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Eucharist to discern a specific topic. This is the first time he is doing it alone. The *Deliberations of 1541* records the discernment process of the early companions of the Society of Jesus and how they arrived at confirming their decision to avail themselves to the pope for further service in the Church.

tical issue: whether the professed houses should receive an income.<sup>47</sup> While the Society made an initial distinction between income for the professed houses and that of their churches, Ignatius began to discern this question more critically while he was developing the *Constitutions*.<sup>48</sup>

The method Ignatius used during this period of discernment was the *Spiritual Exercises*, where he noted his interior movements in prayer and contemplation. However, besides these notations, the other consistent mode of prayer is the celebration of Mass. Ignatius's self-awareness and use of the discernment of spirits, paired with the incorporation of daily Eucharist and the Divine Office, predisposed him to receive divine manifestations through spiritual consolations.<sup>49</sup> He developed an interior sense of God's presence and became more devoted, consoled, and confirmed in his relationship with the Trinity. In celebrating the Eucharist, Ignatius experienced a greater devotion to God, which allowed him to make an informed discernment for the Society of Jesus.

Ignatius had various ways to proceed, yet he chose the celebration of the Eucharist as the primary form of prayer. The Mass was a crucial part of Ignatius's spirituality, as it was a channel of constant praise to the Trinity, from which he sought guidance and confirmation on many decisions.<sup>50</sup> It became a devotional, mystical, and dialectical form of communing with God and seeking his will. According to the saint, specific moments in the *Diary* contained particular graces and spiritual knowledge.<sup>51</sup> These gifts were a product of his devotion, a significant part of his experience during the spiritual diary, having both a substantial and accidental element. The substantial element of this devotion involved actively seeking and searching for God's will. The accidental element was the effectual consequences of

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<sup>47</sup> In *The Founding of the Colleges* document written in 1541, Ignatius began developing norms of poverty for the various houses of the Society of Jesus. He wrote, "We take from the first (mixed) religions... that the house may have income for itself, namely for the sacristy, the adornment of the house, the apothecary... as in a well-ordered hospital... We take from the second (mendicant) religions, inasmuch as for our daily food, clothing, and clothing we do not want to have any income or possessions."

<sup>48</sup> "Introducción de los PP. Ipparraguirre-Ruiz Jurado" on the *Diario Espiritual* in *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2021), 278.

<sup>49</sup> Suquia Goicochea affirms that Ignatius's mystical gifts pre-disposed him to experience a "soothing and sweet knowledge of God." The Church's liturgy provides this grace, but it is not a formulaic or controlled project done by Ignatius. Ignatius's quest to know the will of God opens the saint towards seeking and confirming God's will not to control it but to reveal God's plan to further the soteriological project of the Church through the Society. Angel Suquia Goicochea. *La Santa Misa en la Espiritualidad de San Ignacio de Loyola Segunda Edición*, in Colección "Movimiento Sacerdotal de Vitoria", vol. 9 (Madrid: Egaña, 1989), 232.

<sup>50</sup> "Misa" by Pietro Schiavone in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (ed.), *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 2 vols. (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-SalTerrae, 2007), 1234.

<sup>51</sup> This article highlights some of the many occurrences found in the *Spiritual Diary*.

warmth and joy through that reception, the latter always being a gift from God.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the accidental element of devotion manifested in tears, signaling personal gratitude and consolation for the process.

While the *Spiritual Diary* primarily covered a specific question regarding the Jesuits' way of proceeding with poverty for the formed houses, Ignatius wanted to highlight the importance of spiritual indifference and freedom that would ultimately be a focal point of Ignatian Spirituality. The Eucharist was not only a ritual offering of bread and wine but a total offering of himself to God—and for Ignatius, that is what poverty signified. When Ignatius celebrated the liturgy, his experience of the Trinity left him with spiritual graces and consolation. The euphoric state of the divine shaped the remainder of his life. While this mystical experience may seem inaccessible, the practical elements of worship and discernment paired with a deep self-awareness present a praxis method for the synodal path.

### **3.1. Method and Practice**

Ignatius followed the customary rituals of priestly life, including praying the Divine Office, observing the fast, and preparing for Mass. Diligent with journaling his prayer, these recorded moments reveal significant spiritual movements. For example, on February 23rd, while vesting for mass, he claims to receive visions of Jesus, attributing this to the Trinity [*SD* 67].<sup>53</sup> On another occasion, he invoked the Trinity to “confirm him” in his task as celebrant, priest, and Christian, and as a result, he experienced tears and devotions [*SD* 48]. The habitual practice of liturgical worship exposed him to intimate encounters with God. These moments of consolation are not a result of isolated incidents.<sup>54</sup> These examples followed a method of discernment, including preparing for the election, offering the question to discern, seeking confirmation from God, reoffering the question to God, and finally giving thanks. These steps were not formulaic procedures performed once but were prayed through numerous times in the four months of the *Diary*.

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<sup>52</sup> The 16th C. Jesuit theologian Francisco Suárez analyzes and distinguishes the two types of devotion as referenced in “Devoción” by Santiago Thió in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (ed.), *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 2 vols. (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-SalTerrae, 2007), 587.

<sup>53</sup> All citations for the *Spiritual Diary* will be marked *SD*, followed by the referenced paragraph in the text. I am using Munitiz’s English translation for this article: Joseph Munitiz (trans.), *The Spiritual Diary of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* (London: Inigo Enterprises, 1987).

<sup>54</sup> Understanding the liturgical preparation during Ignatius’ time further provides additional illumination regarding the graces he received during this period of discernment. Like the breviary, the liturgical reforms of Trent were not confirmed until the close of the council in 1568. Since Ignatius had residency in Rome during the time, the probability of his practice of the Tridentine Rite at the council’s close would have been likely. Yet, that would not automatically negate that he would not have followed the rite’s prescription of having an acolyte.

The preparation period for Ignatius involved presenting the issue of poverty to spiritual intercessors whom he trusted. Mary was an integral intercessor and was seen as a critical figure in interceding specifically to God the Father [SD 4]. Ignatius did not present the question until he felt confirmed that it was God's will to pursue it, and only then did he formulate the content of the discernment and present it once again to Mary to assist him "before her Son and Father" resulting in a physical sensation of "burning in every part of my body, followed by tears and the most intense devotion" [SD 9]. He explicitly mentions the pros and cons of having the professed houses accept or not accept a sustained salary. As a result, he "received new insights that the Son first sent his Apostles to preach in poverty, and later the Holy Spirit, by granting his spirit and his spirit gift of tongues confirmed them" [SD 15].

These intercessions highlighted the cosmic community of saints, revealing Christocentric visions confirming or challenging Ignatius's discernment. Several of these moments also indicate Ignatius's receptivity to these revelations. While celebrating the liturgy, "he felt and saw clearly that Our Lady was very propitious, pleading before the Father... and at His consecration, I could not but feel or see her, but that her own flesh was in that of her Son... No doubts about the first offering that was made" [SD 31]. The divine visions concerning the nature of God were tied to the mystery of his discernment. However, there were signs that the process was not always straightforward. For example, Ignatius noticed interior feelings of frustration and anger. He records that after Mass, he had issues "saying more Masses—(because) I felt angry with the Blessed Trinity; I had no desire to prolong the deliberation into the future" [SD 50]. Reflecting on that experience two days later, he writes, "Later I felt strengthened about the past by the knowledge that the earlier spirit had been evil, the one that had wanted to make doubts and feel anger with the Blessed Trinity" [SD 57]. The awareness and honesty Ignatius felt in his prayer demonstrate a true sense of interior freedom and faithfulness to the discernment of spirits. The discernment was not an ideological or rigid one. The intent was to unite with God and follow God's will regarding poverty for the Society of Jesus. The ritual of the Mass was a spiritual space to encounter God, but it was not automatically a producer of spiritual insights. Ignatius did not control the types of gifts he received. Yet, through his reflection, he demonstrates how using the *Spiritual Exercises* is necessary to maintain personal integrity through this theological exercise.

What was revealed to Ignatius was not simply an affirmation of the content of his question but how his submission to God's will and the willingness to search for it reveals the nature of God. In another distinct moment later in the *Diary*, Ignatius recounts intense feelings during the consecra-

tion: “When I held the Blessed Sacrament in my hands, I was impelled to speak and felt intensely moved from within; that I would never leave Him, not for all heaven or earth or... then new impulses, devotion, and spiritual joy” [SD 69]. In another moment during the liturgy, the mystical experience was incredibly intense by which he loses his power of speech, and after celebrating the mass, he felt “drawn to see the Blessed Trinity... and beings to pray ‘Domini Jesu Christe, Fili Dei vivi’ ... on this occasion my feeling in my soul was different and was aware of Jesus as being completely my God” [SD 87]. The loss of speech signifies an act of listening and receiving on Ignatius’s part. The confirmation that he sought was secondary to the primary grace of silent purification and revelation of the person of Christ and the Trinity.

This is not to say there are no issues with interpreting the *Diary*. Towards the end of the work, Ignatius becomes less clear and detailed with his revelations. Some have raised concerns regarding the order of his thoughts and their occasional lack of logical coherence. Other objections include the solitary celebration of the liturgy, the theological differences in emphasis and liturgical understanding, and the absence of communal discernment within this process.

Additionally, because Ignatius had sole authority as Superior General to decide the outcome of new norms regarding poverty within the Society, the application of the *Diary* is irrelevant to contemporary communal discernment. While these points highlight priorities in a post-Vatican II context regarding liturgy and communal discernment, dismissing the relevance of the *Diary’s* contribution to a contemporary setting hastily loses the pneumatic thrust behind the document, and do not detract from the intended sentiments of praising God for the knowledge gained during this period.<sup>55</sup> A superficial reading of the text will easily dismiss Ignatius’s experience as overly pious yet overlook the “mutual causality between prayer and mission.”<sup>56</sup> The Eucharist represented an act of mission in two ways. First, Ignatius offers worship to God with an expressed desire for union with him through faithful and consistent worship. This demonstrates Ignatius’s service to God by maintaining trust and fidelity. Second, the fruits of that union imparted spiritual knowledge, confirming canonical norms and procedures that affected the apostolic service of the Jesuits.

Like any other discernment process, Ignatius’s method is not a systematic mechanism of inputs and outputs, resulting in a straightforward and uncomplicated set of data points. The closeness he felt and documented in

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<sup>55</sup> Ignacio Iparraguirre, Manuel Ruiz Jurado, “Introducción al Diario Espiritual” in *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, 281.

<sup>56</sup> Jean Danielou, *Prayer* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 98.



the *Diary* allowed him to experience spiritual graces, such as consolation and knowledge, to confirm the secondary grace he sought concerning the application of poverty for the Society of Jesus. When the primary grace of communion with God becomes the focus, the consequences of that grace reveal God's intentions for the Church.

#### **4. Contemporary Adaptations and Recommendations for Eucharistic Synodality**

Pope Francis's synodal vision of incorporated Eucharistic synaxis necessarily involves the communal gathering of the faithful around the Eucharistic sacrifice. The true Church demonstrates a "fidelity to the teaching of the Apostles and the celebration of the Eucharist under the guidance of the Bishop... the ordered exercise of ministries; the primacy of communion in mutual service to the praise and glory of God."<sup>57</sup> The *Diary* demonstrates that fidelity and devotion require trust, understanding, and humility. When gathered in the Eucharistic feast, God transforms the faithful's offering, and Christ's truth shines forth. Worship integrates personal and communal praise. In the liturgical dialogue, God's words speak the truth and create a "community of believers of one heart and mind" (Acts 4,32). Liturgical worship is itself a service to God, and it also deepens apostolic service. Fidelity and celebration are co-pillars in the exercise of synodality.

In constructing a theology of synodality, the Church finds through spiritual conversation and discernment a distinct and vibrant voice of the Holy Spirit's promptings to see more clearly a unitive membership in the Body of Christ. Active participation in the Eucharist and discernment are ways of engaging the "Church's mission in her *diakonia*."<sup>58</sup> Programs like Eucharistic congresses can help foster devotion, catechize the faithful, and deepen ties among her members. Through the guidance of the diocesan bishop, local churches have the potential to inspire greater fidelity and engage in the work of evangelization and form "how best to express the faith in words and formulas: *lex orandi, lex credendi*."<sup>59</sup> As a byproduct, participation from the unelected members within local churches contribute to the process within the synodal process of the elected members.

The spiritual engagement on the local level prays together as a particular church and the fruits of that prayer bring insights then brought forth. The process on the local level goes through a process of listening, but approval

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<sup>57</sup> International Theological Commission, "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church, Vatican City; 2 March 2018", accessed 13 February, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_synodalita\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_synodalita_en.html), 25.

<sup>58</sup> International Theological Commission, "Sensus Fidei", 89.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, 75.

and confirmation of these insights rest with the Magisterium. As Superior General and writer of the *Constitutions*, Ignatius had power to enact norms on poverty. Similarly, the authority to sanction canonical norms for the Church is contingent on the Magisterium bound “by the *sensus fidei* (supernatural appreciation of the Faith) of the Church of this and previous times... and of the *communi sensu fidei* of the whole people of God to exercise a pastoral and missionary concern for the world.”<sup>60</sup> The ecclesial authority of the institution does not diminish the faithful’s service exercised through worship or consultation. On the contrary, this service seeks the Holy Spirit’s guidance to transform the whole Church towards an attitude of deeper listening, summarized by the expression *sentire cum ecclesia* “to feel, sense, and perceive in harmony with the Church. This is required not just of theologians, but of all the faithful: it unites all the members of the people of God as they make their pilgrim journey.”<sup>61</sup> Worship nurtures that sensibility to pneumatic movements received from all the faithful. Because discernment is not done in isolation, the faithful require ecclesial structures to process these spiritual movements that contribute to the overall synodal dialogue.

The Church’s synodal life is a renewal requiring consultation with the entire People of God.<sup>62</sup> She must also provide a formative mechanism and spiritual instrument by which this consultation does not revert simply to a democratic caucus but an authentic encounter with the living God. As the *Spiritual Diary* demonstrated, Eucharistic synaxis is possible. While Ignatius’s manner, cultural context, and vocational status may seem outdated or ill-fitted for post-modernity, several elements remain true. At the forefront, the pastoral agenda begins with God’s initiative, followed by a receptivity to discern God’s movements through prayer, reflection, and dialogue, and finally, to submit to the unpredictably of *kairos* with attentiveness to the revealed spiritual graces gained through the process. Eucharistic synaxis requires the members to approach worship and adoration with humility as one community seeking an encounter with Christ, trusting that the Spirit’s love provides the clarity to act.

First, discernment is God’s initiative. In a Post-Reformation Era, Ignatius understood the significant witness poverty had to recenter the Church’s clergy towards service and against vices of economic gain. As the founder of a religious order, his spiritual dependence on God and the desire for union with the divine will became the motivator to examine more closely

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<sup>60</sup> International Theological Commission, “The Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology, Vatican City, 1975”, accessed 26 April, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_1975\\_magistero-teologia\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1975_magistero-teologia_en.html), 2-4.

<sup>61</sup> International Theological Commission, “Sensus Fidei”, 90.

<sup>62</sup> International Theological Commission, “Synodality in the Life of the Mission of the Church”, 65.

how poverty could benefit the ecclesial and spiritual manner of the Jesuits. These practices were never meant solely for his edification but to enter into sacramental dialogue with God and the universal Church. Christ's ministry is the Church's ministry.<sup>63</sup> Christ's institution of the Eucharist begins as a prayer of praise with the "words of institution as its centerpiece" that transformed "his death into the gift of himself."<sup>64</sup> The dialogue begins with what Christ has already instituted, and our participation enhances our ability to respond and act on God's invitation. The Christian's praise of redemption transforms his soul that no longer lives "but Christ who lives" in him (Gal 2, 20). Therefore, the movement of Eucharistic synaxis must begin and end with the liturgical celebration cultivated through personal devotion and worship in the community.

Second, by responding to God's initiative, Ignatius adhered to a strict schedule incorporating personal prayer, devotions, and the celebration of Mass. As a 16th-century priest, he followed the liturgical norms of prayer and incorporated devotions into his schedule. Contemporary adaptation to spiritual and devotional practices can be observed for those in the non-clerical state. Daily reception of the Eucharist, the Divine Office, and spiritual reading are potent for Christian edification and devotion. The temptation is not cross-checking facts, engaging in public opinion polls, or other sociological exercises, but an immersive spiritual experience, further confirming the participant's relationship with God. Including personal experience is important to Ignatian discernment but not at the expense of pursuing God's will. Ignatius's focus on the Eucharist precisely incorporated that synaxis and dialogue. God reveals these graces because "the Church has no other reality or experience of truth as communion so perfect as the Eucharist."<sup>65</sup> Because Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14,6), the Eucharist provides a path forward; "it is a process of fulfillment, a growth to maturity."<sup>66</sup> Particularly in a polarized environment, pride blinds discernment. The pilgrim's path of faith calls individuals towards conversion and purification and challenges individuals towards a deep introspection, silence, and contemplation. Through the contemplative gazing between God and man, this silent dialogue reveals God's charity and wisdom.

The participant's relationship with God must be open to *kairos*. A programmatic and scheduled discernment puts the priority on efficiency rather

<sup>63</sup> John Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in the Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 211.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "Eucharist in Mission" in *Joseph Ratzinger Collected Works Theology of the Liturgy Existence* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 357.

<sup>65</sup> Zizioulas, 115.

<sup>66</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic, and the Spirit of the Liturgy* (Victoria: Hassell Street Press, 2021), 29.

than discernment. Ignatius's election as Superior General involved many issues and concerns. His commitment to God and leaving the decision to divine providence yielded fruitful results. To listen and discern mandates a submission to the *kairos* that wards off the temptation of any fixated schedule in the name of efficiency. The demands of ecclesial administration and the laity's commitments to their families drive a personal motivation to gather results quickly. As a result, a Eucharistic synodal discernment necessitates self-awareness, vulnerability, and honesty before God and neighbor. The Eucharistic community "incarnates and realizes our communion within the very life and communion of the trinity, in a way that preserves the eschatological character of truth while making it an integral part of history."<sup>67</sup> Communion is the expression of God's active Word working towards the intended union of this eschatological schema. The discernment is not for individual gain but a manifestation of God's desire for the human family. This encounter is Pentecostal, "which takes linear history up into a charismatic present moment."<sup>68</sup> The Holy Spirit breathes newness and life within the institution through the rituals of prayer and community, not forsaking tradition but revealing the truth in ways that allow a clearer understanding of contemporary sensibilities.

God's revealed truth reduces "the distance between Him and us is bridged by the aid" and guidance of the Holy Spirit through rituals and Scripture.<sup>69</sup> This revelation and experience of the *logos* is historical and tangible. He is communicating both truth and communion at the same time.<sup>70</sup> Human nature understands itself in the context of communion. This intimacy is incarnational and gives birth to a Christ-centered reality. Communion maintains its strength and potency through obedience. It is an obedience of faith that "must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God."<sup>71</sup> When the will acts out of love and responds obediently to the God he loves, God acknowledges the service, honors the sacrifice, and purifies the heart towards greater intimacy with the divine and neighbor. The Church gathered into a synodal path seeks this truth found in Christ through the spoken word, the intentional liturgical gesture, and the reception of sight and sound through praised ritualistic thanksgiving that the Mass purifies within each Christian to Christ. Christ's existence is historical and personal through the same movement of the spirit of God, which made

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<sup>67</sup> Zizioulas, 114.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, 116.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, 110.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem, 111.

<sup>71</sup> "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, Vatican City; 18 November 1965", accessed 26 April, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html), 5.

Christ Himself a historical being.<sup>72</sup> The revelation of Christ's truth through Eucharistic synaxis does not reduce the rite to a machine. Through complete and active participation in the rite, the congregation recognizes their fraternal communion, sees truth, and proclaims the evangelical message.

The liturgical experience is not limited to the moment of celebration itself. The liturgy is not *verum ens faciendum* (truth in manufacturing) but an unfolding of meaning through understanding the *logos*, which provides its meaning.<sup>73</sup> The reception of Christ in Word and Sacrament requires reflection. The recorded memory sifts through the work of Christ through us, and not only our experience of God at us. Like Ignatius, time for reflection provides an avenue for the person to sift and discern the proper movements of the Holy Spirit free of self-indulgence and ideology. Spiritual and liturgical formation provided the conditions for following God's will with great devotion, charity, and freedom.

## Conclusion

The development of a synodal theology is ongoing. Protocols, structures, canonical regulations, and other ecclesial considerations are being studied. They will be constructed to guide how the Church and its members reflect and discuss the *aggiornamento* of the contemporary milieu. A key element to guide the conversation may be the Church's ability to depend on and often practice liturgical dialogue and worship, mainly when its members are gathered around the Eucharistic table. Ratzinger's Eucharistic vision of Christ calling the Body together provides a healthy invitation that the faithful do not set the agenda for evangelization.

Following Ratzinger's lead in emphasizing Christ's initiative to form the ecclesial perspective does not negate Pope Francis's intention with the synodal process. Adoration and service are vital in aiding the Church to achieve the necessary dialogue for conversion and transformation. In his closing homily, Francis reminds believers that it is through adoration that true freedom is achieved because idolatry to vainglory, success, and ideology has to be confronted to see Christ.<sup>74</sup> Worship necessitates serving others by "washing the feet of a wounded humanity, accompanying those who are frail, weak and cast aside, and going out loving to encounter the poor."<sup>75</sup> Liturgical dialogue seeks to encounter God *and* neighbor to build the kingdom of God.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, 112.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2004), 77.

<sup>74</sup> Francis, "Homily for the Conclusion of the Ordinary Synod, 29 October 2023".

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

The *Spiritual Diary* of Ignatius of Loyola is one example of devotional, liturgical, and ecclesial discernment, highlighting the benefits of Eucharistic synaxis, which the synod hopes to accomplish. The 16th-century mystic prioritized the celebration of the Eucharist not simply out of piety, but out of filial, devoted service. Ritualistic dialogue sharpened his ability to listen and respond to God. The question of poverty was not limited to the temporal realm but focused on spiritual indifference and freedom. The “groans of the Spirit” cannot be heard or understood unless all the faithful take ownership of God’s invitation to unity and spiritual indifference. As the Synod continues its process, greater emphasis on personal devotion and communal worship centered on the Eucharist sharpens the discernment process. Liturgical dialogue and habitual sacramental practice bring union to the Body of Christ by minimizing the ego, encouraging silence, discerning the spirits carefully, and enhancing the faithful’s ability to acknowledge current pneumatic movements. The work of the synod is a collective endeavor of the entire Church beginning around Eucharistic table to adore Christ’s transformative presence in our midst. Worship actualizes apostolic service and intensifies synodal efforts for evangelization when done in loving imitation of Christ’s sacrifice.

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## **Service through Worship: Forming a Eucharistic Devotion for a Synodal Church**

Pope Francis's Synod on Synodality gathers the universal church towards a discerning path of accompaniment that seeks to address the contemporary and pressing issues of the Church. While the Church develops a theology of synodality, this article argues that fundamental to the synodal path requires an incorporated Eucharistic devotion. This

liturgical mechanism incorporates dialogue and worship between the people and God with the hope that Christ's will manifests itself through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharistic theologies of Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI demonstrate how worship integrates a desired union between God and neighbor. Developing a vibrant Eucharistic devotion enhances synodal conversation and highlights a Christocentric vision, broadening the Church's ability to discern how to serve more effectively. Concretely, the example of *The Spiritual Diary of St. Ignatius of Loyola* provides a devotional and practical lens by which God can work through this method of Eucharistic discernment to help bring about God's will for his people.

Keywords: Eucharist, discernment, Ignatian Spirituality, synodality