

## **The Paschal Mystery in the Church's Sacrament**

Having established the fundamental concepts of liturgy, this chapter attempts to identify what sacraments are in the context of the Sacred Trio - Jesus Christ, the Church and the Sacraments.

Beguerie and Duchesneau defines sacraments as “is a worldly reality which reveals the mystery of salvation, because it is its realization”. In particular, it has the following elements<sup>1</sup>:

- ❑ It is always performed in the name of Jesus Christ.
- ❑ It is the work of Holy Spirit.
- ❑ It is a free gift and a call.
- ❑ The effect of sacrament can only be seen in the heart of the recipients who by carrying out the ministry of God or lives in according to the preaching of the God.

### *Part I: Jesus Christ as the Sacrament of God*

#### **Overview**

Jesus Christ is one of the person of the Trinity God. Hence, Jesus Christ is the God and He has all the characteristics of the God as the case of the Father and the Holy Spirit. In addition, Jesus Christ is the Word (*logos*). “The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us” (John 1: 14). Therefore, Jesus Christ is also true human. The duality nature of Jesus becomes the center of the Christian faith. The different titles of Jesus convey different aspects of Jesus identity in relation to the salvation project of God:

*The name Jesus means “God saves”. The child born of the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, “for he will save his people from their sins” (Mathew 1: 21): “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4: 12)<sup>2</sup>.*

*The title “Christ” means “Anointed One (Messiah)”. Jesus is the Christ, for “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10: 38). He was the one “who is to come” (Luke 7: 19), the object of “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28: 20)<sup>3</sup>.*

*The title “Son of God” signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ is God his father: he is the only Son of the Father (cf. John 1: 14, 18; 3: 16, 18); he is God*

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<sup>1</sup> Philippe Beguerie and Claude Duchesneau, *How to Understand the Sacraments*, (Paris 1989).

<sup>2</sup> CCC 452.

<sup>3</sup> CCC 453.

*himself (cf. John 1: 1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. Acts 8: 37; 1 John 2: 23)<sup>4</sup>.*

*The title "Lord" indicates divine sovereignty. To confess or invoke Jesus as Lord is to believe in his divinity. "No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12: 3)<sup>5</sup>.*

### **The Biblical Testimony of Jesus Christ**

*The proclaimer became the proclaimed<sup>6</sup>. Jesus found the Church and He taught them the truth from the God. As inspired by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Church under the leading of Peter, proclaimed the Passover mystery of Jesus Christ. The study of the biblical testimony can give light to how Jesus and the Church are related with one and other.*

It is obvious that the first Christians did not really believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The Lord has risen indeed, and He has appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34). This is due to the fact that there is "no corresponding widespread previous existence in Jewish tradition"<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the New Testament centered on the theme of Jesus Christ's birth, death and resurrection.

Schwarz distinguishes Jesus' resurrection from resuscitation for the resurrection establishes Jesus Christ as the Son of God – the Risen Lord that gives us salvation<sup>8</sup>.

#### *The Markan Witness*

This oldest and smallest gospel starts its main theme by stating "This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1: 1). The Markan witness further supported the view of what is God's understanding of Jesus Christ by using<sup>9</sup>:

- the voice from the heaven when Jesus was being baptized – "You are my dear Son" (Mark 1: 12);
- the voice from cloud – "This is my dear Son, listen to Him" (Mark 9: 7);
- the acquisition from the High Priest that "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God?" (Mark 14: 61);
- the proclamation made by the army officer – "This man was really the Son of God!" (Mark 15: 39).

The Markan witness used almost half the volume of the Gospel to describe Jesus' Passover mystery. This is Jesus Christ who as the Son of God who by means of death, resurrection and ascension, becomes the hope of salvation for those who believe in

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<sup>4</sup> CCC 454.

<sup>5</sup> CCC 455.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament Theology*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, (New York: Charles Scriber's, 1951).

<sup>7</sup> Ulrich Wilckens, *Resurrection: Biblical Testimony to the Resurrection – An Historical Examination and Explanation*, trans. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Christology*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

Him. The grace and the true identity of Messiah become a privilege to the Christians as what Dibelius described as “secret epiphanies”<sup>10</sup>.

### *The Matthean Witness*

The gospel which its principle readers were the converted Jews in the days of the Early Church stresses on the main theme that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of promise made by the God in the days of the Old Testament<sup>11</sup>:

- ❑ the Emmanuel Promise as stated in Isaiah 7: 14 (Matthew 8:17);
- ❑ the Galilee Promise as stated in Isaiah 9: 1-2 (Matthew 4: 12-15);
- ❑ the Bethlehem Promise as stated in Micah 5: 2 (Matthew 2: 5-6);
- ❑ the Servant of Lord Promise as stated in Isaiah 53: 4 (Matthew 8: 17).

Having established Jesus as the promised One and the Easter Event, the Matthean Witness further outlines the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. The Church will be an interim ministry within the unjust world until the day of the Final Judgment<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile, the Church is commanded by Jesus on His day of Ascension that “Go then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 27: 19-20).

### *The Lukan witness*

The Lukan Witness presents Jesus Christ as focal point of the human history<sup>13</sup>. Upon the beginning of His ministry, Jesus made a revolutionary proclamation by reading the scripture from the Prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people” (Luke 4: 18-19). Cassidy states that the Lukan Witness wants to portray Jesus’ ministry as a “serious challenge to the existing social order” through the following verses<sup>14</sup>:

- ❑ Jesus’ promise to the “poor” of the eschatological kingdom (Luke 6: 20);
- ❑ Jesus’ promise to the “hunger” participation in the Messianic banquet (Luke 6: 21);
- ❑ Jesus’ healing of a Roman Officer’s Servant (Luke 7);
- ❑ Jesus He himself often dined with the tax collectors and sinners (Luke 7: 34);
- ❑ Jesus’ parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15).

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<sup>10</sup> Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. From 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. By Bertram Lee Woolf, (London: James Clark, 1971).

<sup>11</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Gunther Bornkamm, “End-Expectation and Church in Mathew” in *Tradition and Interpretation in Mathew*, ed. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, trans. Percy Scott (London: SCM, 1963).

<sup>13</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell, (Philadelphia Fortress, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A study of Luke's Gospel*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1980).

Jesus' main theme of challenge is that, firstly, the promised savior is not solely for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles; secondly, the salvation of the Lord is also for the sinners. In addition, through the angel's proclamation of Jesus' identity (Luke 2: 11), His miracles, resurrection, ascension and the Promised of the Return as the Exalted Lord, the Lukan Witness wants to establish Jesus as the Son of Lord. The word, Lord, in the Greek word used by the Lukan Witness is *Kyrios* – which means Yahweh<sup>15</sup>.

#### *The Johannine Witness*

In the prologue of the Gospel, the Johannine Witness depicts Jesus as the Word, *logos*, who “was with the God”, “was the God” and “the source of life”, and “was in the World” (John 1: 1-5; 10). Furthermore, they highlights the *logos*' intimate relationship with the Father by saying that:

- “the Father is in me and that I am in the Father” (John 11: 38);
- “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14: 9).

In the farewell disclosures (John 14-16), Jesus promises to His disciples the coming of Paraclete, which means the Legal Advisor in Greek. The Paraclete who is indeed the Holy Spirit did come and continue to lead the Church until the end of the days<sup>16</sup>.

Jesus Christ, who is in the mysterious unity in the Trinity, gives up Himself to the Christians - the grace and the salvation from the God by stating:

- “the bread of life” (John 6: 35);
- “the light of the world” (John 8: 12);
- “the gate” (John 10: 9);
- “the good shepherd” (John 10: 11);
- “the true vine” (John 15: 1);
- “the resurrection and the life” (John 11: 25);
- “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14: 6).

All those words depicts Jesus who was in fact the actualized God in the person of human being is the source of salvation for all men.

#### *The Pauline Witness*

Paul who was originally a rabbinic Jew wrote more than a half of the whole New Testament. Hence, it is beyond doubt that Paul was probably the most influential figure in the days of the Early Church.

The Pauline theology firstly emphasized that Jesus' death and resurrection was an eschatological miracle from the God since he wrote<sup>17</sup>:

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<sup>15</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Jesus Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Christology*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Christology*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998).

- ❑ the Crucified one is none other than the “Lord of Glory” (1 Corinthians: 2: 8);
- ❑ the Crucifixion is indeed the God’s intended plan for He died “at the right time” (Roman 5: 6), being “gave up” (Roman 8: 32), and “obedience to the point of death” (Philip 2: 8);
- ❑ Jesus “was handed over to death for our trespasses” (Roman 4: 25);
- ❑ God “did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us” (Roman 8: 32);
- ❑ Jesus’ death was “for all” (2 Corinthians 5: 14) of us.

The Pauline theology’s next theme is to outline Jesus’ intended death and resurrection is in fact bringing all of the human beings the grace and salvation from the God. However, the Pauline Witness further stressed that the grace and salvation are indeed a gift and power of the cross of Jesus as we “were bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6: 20).

Furthermore, the Pauline Witness emphasized that “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Roman 10: 9). However, Christians must be “died in sin” and “were baptized into his death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Roman 6: 2-4). As a result, Christians become “nor according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Roman 8: 4) and the “slaves *douloi* in the new life of the spirit” (Roman 7: 6).

Here comes the relationship between Jesus and the Sacraments. Firstly, “Christ’s death and resurrection are not merely events which produce benefits for the believer, but also are events in which the believer himself partakes”<sup>18</sup>. For every sacrament, there must be the personal participation of the Christian and the God to complete the sacrament itself. Secondly, the Jesus gives a new spiritual power through the sacraments to Christians and enables them to know and experience the fullness of eschatological life<sup>19</sup>.

### **Conclusion - Jesus Christ as the Sacrament of God**

As it can be seen that the resurrection of Jesus is not a common belief for the Jews in the First Century, the biblical testimony as the witnesses of the Early Church to Jesus establishes the fundamental Christology. Schwarz summed up the following points<sup>20</sup>:

- ❑ Jesus is indeed the Risen Lord who has the power over the heaven, the earth and the hell. He is also the God who would pronounce the final verdict at the Last Judgment.
- ❑ The resurrection of the Jesus Christ, as contrast from the purely resuscitation, establishes Jesus as the hope for the Church.
- ❑ The significance of the hope becomes the center of Christians’ faith for all who die in Jesus would be risen to heaven at the end of the day. The is the salvation that Jesus Christ wants to bring us. “But each one will be raised in

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology*, (Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1967).

<sup>19</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Christology*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Christology*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998).

the right order: Christ, first of all; then, at the time of his coming, those who belong to him" (1 Corinthians 15: 23).

*"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15: 3)<sup>21</sup>.*

*Our salvation flows from God's invitation of love for us, because "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiration for our sins" (1 John 4: 10). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5: 19)<sup>22</sup>.*

That Easter Event becomes the core belief for all the Christians. Jesus Christ who as the God and confirmed by the God, is indeed the Promised One as stated in the Old Testament. Apart from that, Jesus is also the focal point in the history of salvation. His salvation extended to all the peoples on the world, both the Jews and the Gentiles, the Goods and the Sinners, the people in the past and in the future time. All in all, Jesus Christ is the gift of love from God.

*Jesus freely offered himself for our salvation. Beforehand, during the Last Supper, he both symbolized his offering and made it really present: "This is my body which is given for you" (Luke 22: 19)<sup>23</sup>.*

The Easter event is also the intended plan of the God's salvation plan. On the day of Passover, Jesus was presented as the lamb in exchange for the sins of all the human beings. His Passover miracle as a free gift redeems all of us from the power of devils.

*The redemption won by Christ consists in this, that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mathew 20: 28), that is he "loved [his own] to the end" (John 13: 1), so that they might be "ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [their] fathers" (1 Peter 1: 18)<sup>24</sup>.*

However, Christians must participate with in the God so that that they can have the new life in the God. The participation is in the form of communion with the Lord. This would not be possible without the power from the Paraclete – the Holy Spirit who will come on the day of Pentecost. Without Jesus the Suffering and Triumph Messiah, all the sacraments becomes human rituals and it is not possible for them to receive the grace of salvation from the God. Hence, Jesus Christ is the source of grace, the key to salvation and the sacrament from the God to bring us new life.

*Christ, "the first-born from the dead" (Colossians 1: 18), is the principle of our own resurrection, even now by the*

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<sup>21</sup> CCC 619.

<sup>22</sup> CCC 620.

<sup>23</sup> CCC 621.

<sup>24</sup> CCC 622.

*justification of our souls (cf. Roman 6: 4), and one day by the new life he will impart to our bodies (cf. Roman 8: 11)<sup>25</sup>.*

## *Part 2: The Church as the Sacrament of Jesus Christ*

### **The Church as the Assembly of Christians**

The word Church is originally come from the Greek word *Ekklesia*. Its Hebrew equivalent is *Qahal*. Both the words *Ekklesia* and *Qahal* mean “an assembly of people”<sup>26</sup>.

The word *Qahal* in the context of Old Testament often refers to the assembly when the Israel gathered together to listen to the commandments, laws and preaching from the God or His representatives as the case may be in Deuteronomy 4: 10, “Assemble the people. I want them to hear what I have to say, so that they will learn to obey me as long as they live and so that they will teach their children to do the same.” The Jewish synagogue is a good example of *Qahal*.

Whereas the word *Ekklesia* in the context of New Testament is the assembly of Christians who share the common belief in Jesus Christ as their savior and their hope. More specifically, *Ekklesia* refers as the “the Church of God” (1 Corinthians 10: 32). It exists in three modes<sup>27</sup>:

- ❑ As a liturgical meeting of the Christians, namely the Holy Eucharist (1 Corinthians 14: 34-35);
- ❑ As a local Church for the Christians at that place, namely “the Church of God which is in Corinth” (1 Corinthians 1: 2);
- ❑ As the One and the Holy Catholic Church as a whole, “in the Church and in Jesus Christ for all time, for ever and ever” (Ephesians 3: 21).

All in all, the Church means:

*The word “Church” means convocation. It designates the assembly of those who God’s Word convokes, i.e. gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ<sup>28</sup>.*

*The Church is both the means and the goal of God’s plan: prefigured in creation, prepared for in the Old Covenant, founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by his redeeming cross and his Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. She will be perfected in the glory of heaven as the*

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<sup>25</sup> CCC 658.

<sup>26</sup> CCC 751.

<sup>27</sup> 張春申, *基督的教會*, (台北: 光啓出版社, 1989); CCC 752.

<sup>28</sup> CCC 777.

*assembly of all the redeemed of the earth (cf. Revelation 14: 4)<sup>29</sup>.*

### **The Church as the Body of Jesus Christ**

*The church is both visible and spiritual, a hierarchical society and the Mystical Body of Christ. She is one, yet formed of two components, human and divine. That is her mystery, which only faith can accept<sup>30</sup>.*

#### *The Head and the Body*

The assembly of Christians alone does not make the Church. It is at most a social or secular community of people. Only when “the continuation, the perpetual presence of the task and function of Christ in the economy of redemption, his contemporaneous presence in history, his life, the Church in the full and proper sense”<sup>31</sup>.

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, “is the head of his Body, the Church” (Colossians 1: 18). When Jesus Christ was with His disciples, He revealed the divine structure and the redemptive functions to them. However, it is only the foundation and institution of the Church rather than the church itself. The Church is not alive until Jesus Christ’s resurrection and became a “a life giving spirit”<sup>32</sup>.

Bovis further sums up the modern Pauline theology that the church as the Body of Christ is simply “the Christ Himself in person”<sup>33</sup>. It is in the sense that the church as the assembly of Christians is truly Christ (rather than the individual Christian on his or her own). The Church in fact fulfils Jesus Christ by continuing Christ throughout time; whereas the Church is fulfilled by Jesus Christ for Christ is the head of the church and it receives its fullness in Christ.

Both Christ and the Church form the *Christus Totus* which has the following characteristics:

*The Church is the Body of Christ. Though the Spirit and his action in the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, Christ, who once was dead and is now risen, establishes the community of believers as his own Body<sup>34</sup>.*

*The Church is this Body of which Christ is the head: she lives from him, in him and for him; he lives with her and in her<sup>35</sup>.*

#### *Jesus Christ and the Church's Union in Love*

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<sup>29</sup> CCC 778.

<sup>30</sup> CCC 779.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

<sup>32</sup> Andre de Bovis, *The Church: Christ's Mystery and Sacrament*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1961).

<sup>33</sup> Andre de Bovis, *The Church: Christ's Mystery and Sacrament*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1961).

<sup>34</sup> CCC 805.

<sup>35</sup> CCC 807.



*The Church is the Bride of Christ: he loved her and handed himself over for her. He has purified her by his blood and made her the fruitful mother of all God's children*<sup>36</sup>.

Jesus gave out His grace and salvation to the Church by dying on the cross. This echoes what John the beloved disciple said, "The greatest love a person can have for this friend is to give his life for them" (John 15: 13). Moreover, Jesus' love with the Church is not just action or an event, but also a "love of union"<sup>37</sup> for Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15: 5). Hence, Pius XII in his Encyclical *Haurietis aquas* stated that the Church is the permanent witness to the divine charity (i.e. God is love) to all human beings.

#### *The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Mystical Union*

*The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the soul, as it were, of the Mystical Body, the source of its life, of its unity in diversity, and of the riches of its gifts and charisms*<sup>38</sup>.

The mystical union is not possible without the work of the Holy Spirit. Bovis firstly pointed out that the Holy Spirit inspires and enlighten the Christians to recognize "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12: 3)<sup>39</sup>. Secondly, Jesus Christ directs the church through the Holy Spirit for the Church "like sheep that had lost their way, but now you have been brought back to follow the Shepherd and Keeper of your souls" (1 Peter 2: 25).

#### *Encyclical Mystici Coporis*

In 1943, Pius XII in the Encyclical *Mystici Coporis* declares the following doctrines regarding the "Body of Christ":

- ❑ Jesus Christ found the Church since He referred Himself as the "cornerstone" for the foundation of the Church (Mark 12: 10-11; Ephesians 2: 20). As a result, all the Christians are invited to join the Church and receive the grace and salvation from the God.
- ❑ The Church as the Body of Christ is also a visible presence on the world. It has its physical presence as a bureaucracy. Having said that the "Christ Jesus" is the "Cornerstone", the foundation is "laid by the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2: 20). It can be seen that the Pauline Witness outlines the physical aspect of the Church as the Body of Christ is similar to a secular bureaucracy: "All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it. In the Church of God has put all in place: in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets, and in the third place teachers; then those who perform miracles, followed by those who are given power to heal or to help others or direct them or to speak in strange tongues" (1 Corinthians 12: 27-28).

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<sup>36</sup> CCC 808.

<sup>37</sup> Andre de Bovis, *The Church: Christ's Mystery and Sacrament*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1961).

<sup>38</sup> CCC 809.

<sup>39</sup> Andre de Bovis, *The Church: Christ's Mystery and Sacrament*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1961).

- ❑ As Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and His divine nature, the Church as the assembly of sinners becomes Holy. Hence, the Church shares the quality of Jesus Christ as the God.
- ❑ The Church as the Body of Christ can only be the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church for it has the faith linkage to the apostles by means of faith, obedience and sacraments. Therefore, the Church is the keeper of the true faith, grace and salvation of the God.
- ❑ As Christians should love the God and the Church is also the Body of Christ, Christians should also love the Church.

### **The Church as the Sacrament of Jesus Christ**

*The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men<sup>40</sup>.*

“He is the head of his body, the church; he is the source of the body’s life. He is the firstborn Son” (Colossians 1: 18). Having said that in the previous chapter Jesus Christ is the sacrament of the God who by His incarnation and once being a human being on the earth, He took out all the sins as a descendent of Adam for all the descendants of Adam. Jesus Christ through His Easter event gives out the grace of the God and the eternal salvation for all human being.

The Church, having regards that it is “the continuance, the contemporary presence, of that real, eschatological triumphant and irrevocably established presence in the world, in Christ, of God’s salvific will”, the Church is the fundamental sacrament of grace from the Christ who being in the world through the Church by means of sign<sup>41</sup>. For Jesus who is the head of the Body of Christ, the Church, fulfills the Church. And hence the Church is the Christ. As Jesus Christ is the sacrament of grace, so as the Church.

### *Part 3: The Sacrament as the Sign of Grace from the God*

#### **The Role of Rituals in the Old Testament Era**

Durkheim in his masterpiece, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, distinguished the sacred from the profane<sup>42</sup>. In fact, as an individual, one might through worship the sacred and receive the power from the supernatural being. What Durkheim emphasized is that the power is in fact coming from the organization which the individual belongs to.

Similarly, the sacred and rituals are also the common practices within all the known religions or supernatural faith in the world. Since the Sinai Covenant, Israel celebrated their festivals, *haggim*, which become the Jews’ core religious beliefs and cultural practices. Hon sums up that the two most important factors for the *haggim* are

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<sup>40</sup> CCC 780.

<sup>41</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

<sup>42</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain, (New York: Free Press, 1965).

memorial (*zikkaron*) and blessing (*b<sup>e</sup>rakah*)<sup>43</sup>. For the core belief of the Judaism is the covenant made between God and the Israel on the Mount Sinai that made them the chosen people. Also, through a number a miraculous arrangement, God led Abraham and his descendants out of the hands of Gentile and His Chosen people's enemies. Despite of the defeat of the Israelites were defeated by the Gentiles, God made His promise through the prophets to His Chosen People that a Messiah would come and saved them out the dark valley.

Those haggim or rituals, despite of the fact that they are held in the name of God, are not sacraments. However, as Saint Augustine said, "In vetere novum lateat, in novo vetus pateat." Haggim and other Jewish rituals are the preparation of the sacraments in the New Testaments Era.

### **Sacraments: The Mystery of Sacramentum and Res Sacramenti**

#### *Definition of Sacrament*

Sacraments are the core rituals of the Church. They are the effect of the Easter Event in which Jesus was both the High Priest and the lamb of God. Hon outlines four key aspects of the sacrament<sup>44</sup>:

- ❑ Sacrament is the community practice of the Church in the name of God in order to receive the grace from Him.
- ❑ Sacraments are established by Jesus Christ as the High Priest and being practiced through reading scriptures, signs, prayers and visible practices.
- ❑ Only under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Christians may receive the grace within and through the Church in the course of sacraments.
- ❑ The principal effect of the sacraments is to enable the Christians to be in communion with God so that they could receive the salvation from the God.

#### *The Event of Christ*

What makes sacrament different from the usual ritual is Jesus Christ. In according to Markan Witness, only the Christians are given the "secret (*mystrion*) of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 4: 11). The secret is the promise of the Messiah as foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament Era as what the Pauline Witness said, "In the past, God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to use through his Son" (Hebrews 1: 1-2).

Jesus, the Son of God and also the God (Mark 9: 7) or Kyrios, is the Emmanuel and incarnated in accordance to the prophets (Matthew 2: 5-6; 4: 12-15; 8: 17). Upon become an adult, Jesus started His ministry on the earth by preaching, healing or even having confrontation with the Pharisees and Jewish leaders in order to establish Good News to the world. His ministry did not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles

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<sup>43</sup>韓大輝 (Savio, Tai Fai, Hon), *與基督有約: 從慶典到奧跡 (Covenant and Rendezvous with Christ: From Celebration to Mystery)*, (香港: 聖神修院, 1995/Hong Kong: Holy Spirit Seminary 1995).

<sup>44</sup>韓大輝 (Savio, Tai Fai, Hon), *與基督有約: 從慶典到奧跡 (Covenant and Rendezvous with Christ: From Celebration to Mystery)*, (香港: 聖神修院, 1995/Hong Kong: Holy Spirit Seminary 1995).

and the sinners. In other words, His ministry which the main theme is salvation are for all peoples (Luke 4: 18-19).

During Jesus' ministry on the earth, He called certain people to follow and even established the Twelve Apostles and gave them His personal preaching on the Kingdom of God (Mark 4: 11). The Twelve became the foundation of the Church (Matthew 27: 19-20) and witnesses the whole event of the incarnation.

The ministry of Jesus would not be completed with the Easter Event in which Jesus became both the High Priest (Hebrew 5: 6) and the lamb of God (Hebrew: 9: 26) on the day of Passover by giving out Himself on the cross. The Crucifixion which was not what the Jews expected was indeed the plan of the God (Roman 5: 6; 8: 32; Philip 2: 8).

The death, resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ become the core belief and hope of Christian's faith for all Christians who died in Christ (Roman 6: 2-4) will receive the grace and salvation from the Lord.

In the granting of the grace and salvation, Christian's participation is an essential element (Roman 10: 9). However, the grace of the Lord is purely a gift and the work of Holy Spirit rather than the merit or acts of the believers. For the Paraclete inspires people to become Christians (1 Corinthians 12: 3) and also helps build the Church on the day of Pentecost (Act 2: 1). Only with the work of the Holy Spirit, Christians and the Church can communion in the Lord.

The incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus is called the Event of Christ (Hon 1995).

#### *Sacramentum and Res Sacramenti*

Rahner used the whole Event of Christ to define the fundamental of sacrament as "a presence in *which sign (sacramentum)* and *what is signified (res sacramenti)* are united inseparably". In other words, sacrament is the sign which signified Jesus Christ and His grace for the salvation of all Christians. All the symbolic and visible elements of the sacrament are in fact similar or base of the whole event of incarnation. Jesus Christ does embody within the sacrament and hence grace can be conferred to the one who believe in Him<sup>45</sup>.

#### **Opus Operatum and Reviviscence of Sacrament**

Having said that the sacrament is purely the free gift from the God, Council of Trent established doctrine of Opus Operatum which means "that grace is conferred on the recipient through the positing of the sacramental sign itself, and neither the merit (holiness) of the minister nor that of the recipient is causally involved"<sup>46</sup>.

Also, the practice of sacrament should in no way construe as a coming to life again of Jesus Christ for Jesus "has appeared once and for all, to remove sin through the

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<sup>45</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

<sup>46</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

sacrifice of himself” (Hebrew: 9: 26). This is the property of reviviscence of sacrament.

#### *Part 4: The Sacred Trio –Jesus Christ, the Church and the Sacraments*

### **The Sacred Communion: Jesus Christ, the Church and the Sacrament**

#### *The Inter-relationship*

Beguerie and Duchesneau sum up the inter-relationship among Jesus Christ, the Church and the Sacrament<sup>47</sup>.

First of all, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and a person of the Trinity, incarnated on the earth as part of His plan of salvation as promised in the Old Testament Era. His incarnation and the whole Easter event fulfilled the whole process of salvation by Jesus’ sacrificing and being the High Priest and the Lamb of God on the day of Passover. Once the Roman soldiers pierced his “spear into Jesus’ side, and at once blood and water poured out” (John 19: 34). The blood and water signify the grace pouring out from Jesus Christ who as the Lamb of God on the Cross for Jesus’ “blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 21: 20). In addition, Jesus ordered all the Christians that, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me” (Luke 21: 19). Hence, Jesus is the fundamental sacrament since He “reveals the mystery of salvation, because it is its realization”<sup>48</sup>.

The Church, being the Body of Christ, is the Christ. Hence, the Church is the sacrament as such the case of Jesus Christ. The Church does not only a society of the Christians, she is also the conveyance of grace. By reason of her physical existence on the world and her communion with Jesus Christ, the Church herself is also the sign that signified Jesus. Moreover, “God’s grace is given expression, embodiment and symbolized, and by being so embodied, is present”<sup>49</sup>. It can be seen that the Church shares Jesus’ attributes of God and also the source of grace. In order words, they are also sacraments. Last but not the least, they are union together as if they are husband and wife – “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave His life for it” (Ephesians 5: 25).

Having been established by Jesus Christ and being practiced by the Early Church, we have the Seven Sacraments. The nature of Opus Operatum and reviviscence indicates the power of the God who one and for all confer His grace to the believers regardless of the recipients and the priests’ own effort or merits. However, the sacraments do take the forms, rituals, scriptures and practices that similar to Jesus’ events of incarnation. In particular, the sacraments are the activities of the Church as a whole.

Lastly, sacrament would not be sacrament of grace without the work of the Holy Spirit. First of all, the Holy Spirit accompanied Jesus on His journey on the earth. Furthermore, without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Christians would not know

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<sup>47</sup> Philippe Beguerie and Claude Duchesneau, *How to Understand the Sacraments*, (Paris 1989).

<sup>48</sup> Philippe Beguerie and Claude Duchesneau, *How to Understand the Sacraments*, (Paris 1989).

<sup>49</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

God. And also, only through the Holy Spirit, Jesus becomes the head of the Church and guides her until the end of the day.

*The Manifestation of What is Signified*

The protestants argue that Christians can confer the grace and salvation directly from the God without having the Church, sacraments and priesthoods as the intermediaries. Rahner used the soul and the body to describe the relationship between Sacramentum and Res Sacramenti. For “the body is the manifestation of the soul, through which and in which the soul realizes its own essence. The sign is therefore a cause of what it signifies by being the way in which what is signified effects itself”<sup>50</sup>.

**Implications**

In conclusion, the mystery of the relationship among Jesus Christ, the Church and the Sacrament would have the following implications for the Christians:

*Jesus Christ*

*The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions*<sup>51</sup>.

- ❑ Jesus Christ who as the fundamental sacraments as being the Lamb of God on the day of Passover continues the conferring of the grace and salvation through the Church and the Seven sacraments as visible signs which signifies what is signified.
- ❑ Jesus Christ's presence in the Church and the Sacrament witnesses the love He had given to all the people on the earth. The presence of the Church, the sacraments and the Christians become the basis of hope for the human being salvation.
- ❑ The Jesus presents Himself as the sacrament to Church brings new life to those who believe in Him.

*The Church*

*The Church celebrates the sacraments as a priestly community structured by the baptismal priesthood and the priesthood of ordained ministers*<sup>52</sup>.

- ❑ The Church being the Body of Christ and found by Christ, become Christ and hence she is also a sacrament of salvation.

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<sup>50</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

<sup>51</sup> CCC 1131.

<sup>52</sup> CCC 1132.

- By reason of its physical presence, the Church becomes a sign that signified Jesus. In other words, the Church witnesses the Passover Mystery of Jesus Christ.
- The Church on the command from Jesus on His day of Ascension (Matthew 28: 20) becomes the intermediary's presence of Jesus until the end of the day. Hence, the Church has to carry out the ministry of God as what Jesus had done on the earth.

### *Sacraments*

*The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith which welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it<sup>53</sup>.*

*The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness<sup>54</sup>.*

- Sacraments signifies Jesus is an exclusive gift to the Church. The gift is the love of the God who brings salvation to those who believe in Him.
- Despite of the nature of Opus Operatum and reviviscence, the faith of the Christians determines whether the sacrament would bring salvation for those who believe in God. The faith is not the merit and effort of any individuals or priesthoods. Rather, it is the pure gift of the God and God has given the free will to us so that we may choose to believe or not.
- Through the grace conveyed in the sacraments, sanctification is achieved.

Hence, the universal Church is seen to be “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> CCC 1133.

<sup>54</sup> CCC 1134.

<sup>55</sup> LG 4; PL 4, 553.

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CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church

COD Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta

DS H. Denzinger, A. Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, (Freiburg 1965).

LG Lumen Gentium

PL J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina* (Paris 1841 - 1855)

PO Presbyterorum Ordinis

SC Sacrosanctum Concilium

STh Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*

UR Unitatis Redintegratio

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