

Praise for *A Body Broken for a Broken People*

“These pages show why close attention to Scripture matters and why Scripture in itself is not enough. Francis Moloney demonstrates that individual texts, however unambiguous they may seem, need to be set within a larger context of ongoing interpretation found in the New Testament itself. But he shows as well that an essentially unfinished Bible needs to be set within the still larger context of the Church’s interpretation of Scripture through history, the never-ending reading that we call Tradition. Not all will agree with all the assumptions or conclusions found here, but it is hard to deny the soundness of Moloney’s approach or the timeliness of what he offers.”

The Most Reverend Mark Coleridge, BA DSS,
Archbishop of Brisbane, Australia

“Francis J. Moloney’s *A Body Broken for a Broken People* offered a beautiful meditation on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist through careful and lucid interpretation of the relevant New Testament texts some 25 years ago. This new edition thoroughly updates and revitalizes that work as Moloney brings a lifetime of contemplative study to bear on the texts through which the ‘earliest Church looked back to a Tradition of Jesus’ sharing meals with the broken and the marginalized’ and provided ongoing interpretation and application of Christ’s words for the faithful who live ‘within the ambiguity of the contemporary human story’. The Eucharist is indeed the place where God’s broken yet faithful people gather for a sacred encounter with Christ that nourishes and challenges body and soul. Moloney likewise faithfully summons the Church to engage this Tradition anew in the 21st century and reflect upon its call to openness and balance in sacramental life. Christians of all traditions will be both challenged and supported by this new offering for them.”

Sherri Brown, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of New Testament,
Department of Theology, Creighton University

“I rejoice to see an exegete taking a courageous look at a pastoral problem. He has performed a task too often abandoned by the specialist who imagines that he has completed his work when he thinks that he has determined the meaning of the texts. The exegete should do more. The specialist should always be concerned with the pastoral impact of scholarly affirmations, particularly when explaining the contexts within which the most important actions of Jesus of Nazareth took place. ... Exegetical endeavor is indispensable to prevent the Church from resting sleepily on past practices. ... Francis Moloney invites us not to settle for acquired positions of strength. They must always be challenged with the demands of the Gospel message.”

Xavier Léon-Dufour, SJ, author of *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread:
The Witness of the New Testament*

“Francis Moloney is both a biblical exegete and theologian of international standing within the Academy and Church. From within the heart of the Church he is thus able to ask critical questions about Jesus’ table practice and the Christian Churches’ current eucharistic practice. With an eye to the Synod within the Catholic Church on the Family, this book looks directly at the exclusion from the eucharistic table of those who have been divorced and remarried. What wisdom can the biblical accounts offer for pastoral practice today? In examining significant eucharistic texts across the Gospels and Paul’s letters, Moloney points to the earliest perception of Eucharist as Jesus’ self-gift to disciples who betray, deny, misunderstand, and fail. Eucharist in Moloney’s words is ‘a body broken for a broken people.’ This New Testament theology of Eucharist is Moloney’s gift to the Church, and especially her Bishops, in pondering issues of worthiness in the brokenness of *all* our lives. I highly recommend this for all Christians seeking a richer understanding of the Eucharist in today’s communities.”

Associate Professor Mary Coloe, PBVM, Head of the Department of Biblical Studies, Yarra Theological Union, University of Divinity, Melbourne

On Francis J. Moloney’s *Reading the New Testament in the Church*

“Frank Moloney’s very readable guide to the New Testament attempts to bridge the gap that all too often exists between the scholarly interpretation of Scripture and the faith of the Church. By reminding us that the Scriptures were written by believers for believers, he encourages his readers to face up to the challenges they contain. Although the book is addressed primarily to Catholics, Christians of all denominations will discover here how sacred Scripture can still speak to and challenge believers today.”

Morna D. Hooker, Lady Margaret’s Professor Emerita,
University of Cambridge Life Fellow, Robinson College

“Every now and then a scholarly work so aptly meets a glaring need that one is tempted to cry out, ‘Why wasn’t this done before?’ Once again, Francis Moloney has drawn upon his internationally renowned biblical expertise, vast knowledge of scholarly literature, and theological sensitivity to produce this timely resource for pastors and educators in the Christian tradition. It admirably achieves its aim of bridging the gap between technical biblical scholarship and scriptural literacy in the Church.”

Brendan Byrne, SJ, Professor of New Testament,
University of Divinity, Melbourne

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Francis J. Moloney, SDB, AM, FAHA, is an Australian Salesian Priest. Educated in Rome (STL, SSL) and at the University of Oxford (D. Phil.), he has taught widely, in Europe, Israel, Australia, East Asia, and the USA. Most recently he was the Professor of New Testament and the Dean of the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America (Washington, DC) (1999-2005), and the Provincial Superior of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Australia and the Pacific (2006-2011).

He is the author of many significant books and studies, especially regarding the Gospel of John, including: *The Johannine Son of Man* (1976, 2nd edition 2007); the 3-volume *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (1993), *Signs and Shadow: Reading John 5-12* (1996), and *Glory not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (1998); *Reading John: Introducing the Johannine Gospel and Letters* (1995); *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina series, 1998); *The Experience of God in the Johannine Writings* (with Anthony J. Kelly, 2003); *The Gospel of John: Text and Context* (2005); *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological and Literary Study* (2013); and, as editor, Raymond E. Brown's *Introduction to the Gospel of John* (Anchor Bible Reference Library, 2003).

Other New Testament studies include: *Beginning the Good News: A Narrative Approach* (1992), *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (2002), *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (2004), *The Resurrection of the Messiah: A Narrative Commentary on the Resurrection Accounts in the Four Gospels* (2013), and *Reading the New Testament in the Church: A Primer for Pastors, Religious Educators, and Believers* (2015). He is also the author of *Mary: Woman and Mother* (1988), *Disciples and Prophets: A Biblical Model for the Religious Life* (1980), *A Life of Promise: Poverty-Chastity-Obedience* (1984), and *Life of Jesus in Icons from the "Bible of Tbilisi"* (2008).

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Body Broken for a Broken People

**DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE,
AND THE EUCHARIST**

THIRD EDITION

FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, SDB



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Hapag ng Pag-asa, “table of hope,” is the work of Joey Velasco (1967-2010). His work strove to situate Jesus Christ among the Filipino poor, awakening a sense of faith and a cry to social action for the underprivileged. It is reproduced with the permission of the artist's widow, Queenie Velasco, and the Joey Velasco Foundation, Inc.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	x
Abbreviations	xi
Foreword by Xavier Léon-Dufour, SJ	1
Introduction	5
CHAPTER ONE: Raising Questions	13
A Return to the Original Design	18
Posing Questions to the Tradition	25
Conclusion	29
Notes	32
CHAPTER TWO: The Eucharist at Corinth	41
The Context	43
1 Corinthians 10:14-22	47
1 Corinthians 11:17-34	51
Conclusion	57
Notes	59
CHAPTER THREE: The Gospel of Mark	71
The Disciples	72
They Did Not Understand About the Loaves	76
Jesus' Last Meal with His Disciples	82
Conclusion	89
Notes	91
CHAPTER FOUR: The Gospel of Matthew	99
Disciples who Fail	103
Israel and the Disciples at the Bread Miracles	107
The Last Supper	115
Conclusion	119
Notes	120

CHAPTER FIVE: The Gospel of Luke	129
The Multiplication of the Loaves	130
The Last Supper	135
<i>Lukan meals</i>	135
<i>The last meal</i>	138
<i>A meal that is also a farewell discourse</i>	140
The Journey to Emmaus—and the Return to Jerusalem	144
The Risen Jesus Instructs and Commissions His Disciples	150
Conclusion	152
Notes	154
CHAPTER SIX: The Fourth Gospel	167
Eucharistic Hints in John 6:1-15, 6:51-58, and 19:34	168
The Problem of the Last Discourse	173
The Literary Design of John 13:1-38	175
The Gift of the Morsel: A Eucharistic Interpretation	178
<i>The footwashing and its aftermath (vv. 1-17): a sketch</i>	178
<i>The central statement (vv. 18-20)</i>	180
<i>The gift of the morsel and its aftermath (vv. 21-38)</i>	182
Conclusion	188
Notes	191
CHAPTER SEVEN: Divorce, Remarriage, and the Eucharist	205
Jesus at Table with the Broken	206
Divorce and Remarriage in the New Testament	209
<i>Jesus of Nazareth</i>	213
<i>1 Corinthians 7:8-16: God has called us to peace</i>	218
<i>Mark 10:1-12//Matthew 19:1-12 (Matthew 5:32 again)</i>	220
Exclusion from the Table	228
Conclusion	232
Notes	237
Bibliography	255
Index of Authors	283
Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Sources	289

*... io mi rendei,
piangendo, a quei che volontier perdona.
Orribil furon li peccati miei;
ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.*

Dante, *Il Purgatorio* iii 119-23

In gratitude for
the long and eucharistic lives
of my parents:

Denis (1899-1992) and Mary (1905-1996) Moloney

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ABBREVIATIONS

I have given complete titles for journals and series within the text. On a few occasions I have used the following recognized abbreviations.

1QS	<i>The Community Rule</i> (Qumran)
11QTemple	<i>The Temple Scroll</i> (Qumran)
ACFEB	Association Catholique Française pour les Études Bibliques
AT	Author's translation
BDAG	Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and Frederick W. Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3 rd ed. Revised by Frederick W. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BCE	Before the Common Era
BDF	Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CE	Common Era
CD	<i>The Damascus Document</i> (Qumran)
DS	Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer. <i>Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum</i> . 33 rd ed. Freiburg: Herder, 1965
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
LXX	The Septuagint
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina</i> . Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1857-1886
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible
SBL	Society for Biblical Literature
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
s.v.	Sub voce ("under the word" in a dictionary)
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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FOREWORD

In reading these pages I have heard the sound of the Good News. Wonderful, but infrequently heard. Jesus lived the Gospel of mercy and he proclaimed it without faltering. What is more, he spoke first of all to the poor, the broken. In Jesus' vision of things, what matters is not righteousness in the observance of the commandments, but unconditional commitment to his person, love of God, and love of others. Applied to the contemporary celebration of the eucharistic liturgy, is this preferential love of Jesus still visible? Has Jesus' call to joy been stifled by the detailed indications concerning who might or might not participate in the mystery? Has the Good News been carefully stored away in silos, in an attempt to preserve it better? So that it may never be deprived of its youth, it needs to be let loose into the open air. Francis Moloney guides us to listen carefully to the ever-clear voice of a Living Word.

He has approached the difficult problem of the authentic Gospel message over against a tendency that restricts eucharistic practice to a closed circle of "the pure." This is an ancient tendency. Paul himself gave rules of discernment for access to the sacred mysteries. It was a concern of the second and third century Church that did not feel able to hold to its bosom certain "sinners," such as those who had fallen away into apostasy. This self-defensive reflex action of the institutionalized body of the Church ought, nevertheless, to be always counterbalanced by a profound reflection upon the attitude of Jesus of Nazareth. Here, beside many others, the exegete exercises his office in the Church; he must, in season and out of season, assist ecclesial practice ceaselessly to renew itself.

Will one ever be able to say the last word on this question? Such a hope appears somewhat naïve to me, both from the side of the institutionalized Church and from the side of the exegetes. Thus my opinion differs from that of the author on some minor issues: I

do not think that Matthew depended directly upon Mark, nor do I accept his structure of John 13, nor his suggestion that the morsel of bread offered by Jesus to Judas was eucharistic. But the essential point lies not in certain exegetical presuppositions, but in one clearly given fact: the institution of the Eucharist is always linked to a mention of Judas the traitor and the prophecy of the denials and failure of the disciples. All exegetes agree on that point. Francis Moloney has pushed this evidence one step further, suggesting that the Eucharist was understood by the early Church as instituted for the broken. This is a stimulating hypothesis that deserves consideration.

I rejoice to see an exegete taking a courageous look at a pastoral problem. He has performed a task too often abandoned by the specialist who imagines that he has completed his work when he thinks that he has determined the meaning of the texts. The exegete should do more. The specialist should always be concerned with the pastoral impact of scholarly affirmations, particularly when explaining the contexts within which the most important actions of Jesus of Nazareth took place. Indeed, we have become accustomed to speaking of the institution of the Eucharist without taking into account the existential context within which this institution took place.

It is here that we have a tendency to simplify the data. Which one of us is able to regard himself or herself as “worthy” to approach the Eucharist? Do I practice all the demands of the Sermon on the Mount? It is thus that I approach the Table of the Lord with a contrite heart? Yes, the Eucharist is there for the broken. This book that I am introducing to you shows that clearly. One question remains. What are we to think of the situation of that person who clearly offends the present laws of the Church and who is unable, for all sorts of reasons, to renounce that situation judged by the Church, quite rightly, as irregular? Has the Church the right to ban these broken people from eucharistic practice?

The answer to this difficult question cannot come from a purely exegetical study. Only the consensus of the Church can correctly appreciate its interior resistance to the poison that unlimited eucharistic access of one or other member whom it considers “guilty” may generate. But exegetical endeavor is indispensable to prevent the Church from resting sleepily on past practices. The critical function

of those who have been entrusted by the Church to spell out the immediate meaning of the biblical texts must go on without ceasing. Ecclesial behavior is determined by two factors:

1. The Church's place in each epoch.
2. Its need to be critical of that epoch.

Who does not go forward falls back, as the ancient Fathers of the Desert used to say. However, to go forward it is necessary to momentarily lose the balance one had in the previously acquired situation. It is necessary to keep putting one's foot forward, and in this way eventually regain the balance that had been briefly lost.

Francis Moloney invites us not to settle for acquired positions of strength. They must always be challenged with the demands of the Gospel message.

Xavier Léon-Dufour
Paris (Centre Sèvres)
1990

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INTRODUCTION

“**T**he Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me ... This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this ... in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (see 1 Cor 11:24-26).¹ Paul has called his erring Corinthian converts to task by telling them the story of Jesus’ words and actions “on the night when he was betrayed” (v. 23). That same story has been told and retold for almost two thousand years. Christians have experienced the eucharistic story, enshrined within the liturgy, in the Church’s response to the command of Jesus: “Do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, 25). However, this story has not only been told in the liturgy. It has been narrated just as significantly in the lives of Christians who have been prepared to break their own bodies and spill their own blood in a deeply eucharistic way, proclaiming “the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). Rooted in the broken body and the spilt blood of Jesus himself, the Eucharist has always been the story of a body broken for a broken people. This is the aspect of the central mystery of the Christian life that I would like to highlight through the New Testament study that follows. Above all, I wish to show that the Eucharist is the celebrated and lived expression of a love so great that we have never been able to match it.

Such love, however, raises some difficult questions to its institutionalization. As a twenty-first century Christian Church looks back upon its history, it should repeatedly test whether it has lost touch with its founding story. I wish to raise some questions that arise from a contemporary reading of that inspired story. Through my years of teaching the New Testament I have been increasingly surprised by an overwhelming impression that the eucharistic passages in the New

Testament proclaim the presence of the love of God, made visible in Jesus, to a broken people. This “brokenness,” of course, is articulated in different ways by the New Testament authors, but the sense of the Eucharist as God’s gift to those in need is all-pervading. I began to articulate this impression in various lectures from 1986 to 1988. I eventually published some preliminary results of my research into this question in a scholarly article in 1989, and a book appeared in 1990.² A foreword from Xavier Léon-Dufour, SJ, was part of that first edition; it is retained here because of its importance. That edition was published by a Catholic publishing house in Australia, but had come to the notice of publishers in the United States of America. A second, slightly rewritten edition appeared with an American publisher in 1997.³ That edition attempted to reach beyond the original Roman Catholic audience, to speak to as many people as possible so that they may more deeply appreciate both the beauty and the risk of celebrating Eucharist. Given some of the entrenched traditions that surround the understanding and practice of the Eucharist in many of the established Christian Churches, some found my study uncomfortable. What follows could be regarded as a third edition of *A Body Broken for a Broken People*, but that hardly represents the agenda of the present publication.

It is inspired by the courageous openness manifested by Pope Francis, and responds to his charismatic presence as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Following the first session of the Synod of Bishops on the Family (October 2014), Pope Francis (and many Bishops across the world) asked, in continuation of the practice of the return to the sources of our faith (*ressourcement*), so central to the Second Vatican Council, that time and effort be devoted to a study of the biblical and theological traditions that impinge upon marriage and family in the Catholic Church.

The German Bishops have been the most outspoken. They have formally stated that “only a minority think that present Church teaching is theologically correct and pastorally appropriate.”⁴ What follows will appear between the two sessions of the Synod on the Family, due to resume in October 2015, and its focus is caught by the sub-title: “Divorce, Remarriage, and the Eucharist.” It thus reaches beyond the earlier studies, and I trust will serve all Christians who

celebrate and live the Eucharist. But it is written expressly to guide Roman Catholics, and especially Catholic leaders, in our attempt to rethink some traditions in the light of the difficult questions that contemporary Catholic life has posed to the Synod. It is also a response to the request of Vatican II: “The sacred scriptures contain the word of God, and, because they are inspired, they truly are the word of God; therefore the study of the Sacred page should be the very soul of sacred theology” (*Dei Verbum*, 24).⁵ The Word of God must be unleashed, to be in the Church “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 5:12).

I first look at the place of a biblical study of the New Testament material that questions the well-established tradition of “exclusion” from the Table of the Lord in the Christian Churches (Chapter One). Chapter Two devotes attention to 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, long used to distance so-called sinners from the eucharistic table. Especially important, over the centuries, for this end, has been 11:27: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.” However, as always in a study of the Pauline literature, we must attempt to rediscover the precise situation in the Corinthian Church that led Paul to quote from his tradition of the words of Jesus (see vv. 23-25) in his debate with his converts. This rediscovery calls for a consideration of 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 and its wider context. The practice of the blessing of the cup and the breaking of the bread is used to exhort the Corinthians to a more committed Christian form of life in a pagan world. This study attempts to discover the original and originating Christian Traditions that produced the New Testament texts, as we have them. The Tradition existed prior to the written Word; the Word articulates the Tradition. It is thus important to follow the historical development of that Word in our reflections. The Letter to the Corinthians is one of the earliest pieces of Christian writing we possess. It appeared about 54 CE, only some twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Chapter Three is dedicated to Mark 6:31-44 and 8:1-10 (the feeding miracles) and Mark 14:17-31 (the Last Supper). My concern

is to rediscover what the Gospel of Mark (which appeared about 70 CE) attempted to say to a Christian community about the celebration of the Eucharist through telling of the story of Jesus. Each eucharistic text is set within the wider context of the narrative flow of the Gospel. I presuppose that we can best find what Mark (or Matthew, Luke, or John) is telling his readers or listeners by looking at the entire story, not merely the part that appears most immediately relevant to our search for eucharistic thought and practice. Although at first sight very similar, there is need to study Matthew's re-telling of the same stories (Matt 14:13-21 and 15:32-39 [the feeding miracles] and 26:20-35 [the Last Supper]). Matthew's account, which appeared in the second half of the 80's CE, is not an unconsidered copying of his source, Mark.⁶ Attention must be given to Matthew's pastoral concern for his particular community through his well-considered use of these accounts. Chapter Four locates these passages within their narrative contexts.

Chapter Five is devoted entirely to the Lucan material: Luke 9:10-17 (the feeding miracle), 22:14-38 (the supper), and 24:13-35 (Emmaus), read in close association with the final meal with the eleven apostles (24:36-49). Of all the authors of the Synoptic Gospels, Luke is the most original. He has only one feeding miracle, while Mark and Matthew have two. He also adds the story of the walk to Emmaus. This significant narrative is found nowhere else in the New Testament.⁷ Luke's ability to "tell a good story" is reflected in his very personal use of the traditional material of the feeding miracle and the Last Supper.⁸

In his story of Jesus' last encounter with his disciples, the Fourth Evangelist gives no explicit account of a meal tradition containing words of institution. Scholars often miss this Evangelist's contribution to eucharistic theology in 13:1-38, and important eucharistic teachings in John 6:51c-58 and 19:34 must not be ignored.⁹ Through a detailed study of John 13:1-38 (Chapter Five) I suggest that, while the Eucharist is not at the center of the narrative found in the first section of the Gospel's account of Jesus' final evening with his disciples, there is much to learn from the story of Jesus' gift of the morsel on the night he was betrayed.

Only on the basis of the data I have assembled from the inspired

pages of the New Testament itself do I have any right to raise theological and pastoral questions of divorce, remarriage, and the Eucharist. Pope Francis and many of the Bishops made clear after the first session of October 2014, that critical questions need to be asked about the Church's understanding of divorce, remarriage, and admission to the eucharistic table. Such questions must be informed by a critical reading of the early Church's teaching on divorce and remarriage.¹⁰ As Xavier Léon-Dufour indicated in 1990, this critical reading must be conducted from the heart of the Church. It is from there that I ask about Jesus' own table practice, and the eucharistic practices of the early Church revealed to us in the authoritative Word of God in the Scriptures.

Since 1990 I have often been asked about the impact my work on the eucharistic texts in the New Testament might make upon the problem of the full participation of divorced Catholics in the eucharistic table. This question was hotly debated at the first session of the Synod on the Family, and left the Bishops undecided. The position of the German Bishops is clear: "The Eucharist is not a reward for the perfect but a magnanimous remedy and nourishment for the weak."¹¹ The debate will resume in the second session. Earlier editions of *A Body Broken for a Broken People* raised the issue but made no attempt to respond to it. I face this shortcoming in the present study. In a new final chapter I summarize what the New Testament and its contemporary interpreters say about Jesus' and the early Church's teachings on divorce. Once that is in place, I may be in a better position to consider how the "Word of God" might or might not raise questions for the Catholic Church's current practice in the admission of divorced and remarried Catholics to the eucharistic table. This is a delicate matter. At the Second Vatican Council the Church taught that Scripture and Tradition should not be regarded as "two sources" for revelation. In some fashion they are one single source, coming from the same divine well-spring (*Dei Verbum* 9). Just how they relate to one another remains an issue to be investigated, and this study raises the question sharply. How does the teaching of Scripture on God's gift of the Eucharist, and the early Church's struggle to come to terms with Jesus' teaching on divorce, also found in our Sacred Scriptures, relate to current Roman Catholic practices? Once some

well-researched responses are given to that question, then will I be in a position to make some firm suggestions concerning the authentic Catholic Tradition (Chapter Seven).

This is not only a book for scholars, even though it has notes that situate my reflections within the broader scholarly discussion of these questions. The current notes retain much of my earlier documentation, but update its breadth and depth considerably. They can be ignored! I have attempted to write in a way that is accessible to all people interested in celebrating and living the Eucharist in the Christian Churches. I am dedicating it to my deceased parents, whose eucharistic lives continue to impact upon my own.¹² The dedication, therefore, indicates my gratitude and my “memory” of them. This memory continues to proclaim the Lord’s death to me ... until he comes again.

I would like to record my thanks to a group of fellow-scholars and friends who have been part of this long journey: Brendan Byrne, SJ, Mark Coleridge (now Archbishop of Brisbane, Australia), Peter Cross (RIP), Rod Doyle, CFC, Michael FitzPatrick, OFM (RIP), and Nerina Zanardo, FSP. I am particularly grateful for the lively interest that Xavier Léon-Dufour, SJ, took in the first edition, despite our differences of opinion on the relationships between the three Synoptic Gospels, and the understanding of John 13. His own book on the eucharistic texts in the New Testament remains a classic and a major point of reference for what follows.¹³ His valuable Foreword is included in this 2015 edition, despite his passing in 2007.

I am very grateful to Fr Paul Prassert, SDB, Provincial of the Thai Province of the Salesians of Don Bosco. He made possible a lengthy stay at the resort *Talay Dao*, in the royal city of Hua Hin, where I was graciously and generously cared for by my hosts Sukkum and Jarissri Shrimahachota. I began this rethinking and rewriting in those peaceful surroundings, aided only by my New Testament and my Thai friends. It was an excellent way to generate renewed enthusiasm. I am equally grateful to the Postdoctoral Fellows within the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry at Australian Catholic University: Dr Stephen Carlson, Dr Toan Do, and Dr Ben Edsall. They have provided expert and informed critical readings of the penultimate version of this study. My colleague, Dr Mary Coloe, PBVM, read the

entire script as it neared completion. Her sharp eye and scholarly expertise have rendered my readers a significant service.

Although I am responsible for all that follows, these people have shown me that the Eucharist is not only cult; it is life.

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NOTES

1 The words “broken for you” are widely attested in early manuscripts, but doubts remain about their originality. See John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 430-32, for its rejection (although he sees it as a very early [second century] liturgical addition). In support of its inclusion, see François Bovon, *Luke*, Hermeneia, 3 vols., trans. Christine M. Thomas, Donald S. Deer, and James Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002-2012), 3:154-56, 158-60. For further detail, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 562. The RSV places them in a note.

2 Francis J. Moloney, “The Eucharist as the Presence of Jesus to the Broken,” *Pacifica* 2 (1989), 151-74; idem, *A Body Broken for a Broken People: Eucharist in the New Testament* (Melbourne: Collins-Dove, 1990).

3 Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1997.

4 Christa Pongratz-Lippitt, “Remarried Divorcees Issue a Test Case for Church’s Credibility, German Bishops Convinced,” *National Catholic Reporter*, December 29 (2014), 1. The article is a summary of the statement from the Bishops’ working party preparing for the second session of the Synod in October, 2015, issued on December 22, 2014. These sentiments were reinforced by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Friesing, Head of the German Bishop’s Conference, and a member of the Council of Cardinals advising Pope Francis on the renewal of the Curia, in an interview with Luke Hansen, SJ, in the Memorial Church, Stanford University, January 18, 2015.

5 See Francis J. Moloney, “Vatican II and ‘The Study of the Sacred Page’

as ‘The Soul of Theology’ (*Dei Verbum* 24),” in *God’s Word and the Church’s Council: Vatican II and Divine Revelation*, ed. Mark O’Brien and Christopher Monaghan (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2014), 19-40.

6 I presuppose that Matthew and Luke both used Mark and a further common source, usually called “Q” (from the German word *Quelle* = source). For a very clear presentation of this widely-help hypothesis, see John S. Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 1-40. However, neither Mark, Matthew, nor Luke can be understood in terms of their “sources.” They grew within a context of a living tradition that will never be entirely subject to scholarly analysis.

7 There is a hint of it in the “longer ending” of Mark in Mark 16:12-13. This passage does not belong to Mark’s Gospel, but is a later scribal addition. See Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 355-62; Adela Y. Collins, *Mark*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 802-18.

8 The originality of Luke’s Gospel is a good example of that “living tradition” mentioned above, in note 6.

9 See, for example, R. Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975), 249-59. He concludes his (excellent) survey of current scholarship: “The fourth gospel represents a maverick form of Christianity, to be sure, in which the sacraments, at first at least, were not known or practiced” (259).

10 On the importance of such an approach, see Francis J. Moloney, *Reading the New Testament in the Church: A Primer for Pastors, Religious Educators, and Believers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 1-21. This chapter has the title: “Catholic and Critical: The Challenge of Scripture in the Catholic Tradition.”

11 Pongratz-Lippitt, “Remarried Divorcees Issue a Test Case...,” 1.

12 For further reflection on this, see Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 214 note 12.

13 Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist, 1987).

RAISING QUESTIONS

It can be said, without too much fear of error, that each major period of the history of the Christian Church's life has been marked by its own particular eucharistic theology and practice.¹ Many factors have led to the predominant understanding and practice of Eucharist in the various Christian traditions. While some of these factors are inevitably cultural and thus historically conditioned, the story of Jesus' celebration of the final meal with his disciples has always guided the eucharistic thought and practice of the Christian Churches. Celebrations of the Lord's Supper are highlighted by the use of biblical readings and—in most Christian traditions—the use of the words of Jesus over the bread and wine at the Last Supper, as they are recorded in the Gospels and in St Paul.² These practices, and especially the latter, indicate the significance of the story of Jesus' words and actions on the night before he died for the faith and practice of the Christian Churches. They regard the celebration of the Lord's Supper as a response to Jesus' command: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; see also 1 Cor 11:24-25).

In the light of the New Testament, an answer should be sought to an important and delicate question: what are we doing in memory of Jesus? A further question emerges from Paul's early teaching and a reading of the later New Testament Gospel narratives: for whom was this memory evoked? Centuries of eucharistic practice in almost all Christian traditions suggest that the celebration of the Eucharist, and especially the sharing of the eucharistic species (normally consecrated bread and wine), is only open to an inner-circle of worthy believers. Is this firm tradition an accurate reflection of the eucharistic teachings of the New Testament? These are questions that touch all the Christian

cultures and Churches of various denominations that celebrate the Lord's Supper. One of the principles used in the administration of the Eucharist in the Christian Churches is that they should permit this encounter with the Lord only to those whom, as far as they can judge, are worthy of such intimacy. There may be many differences in the way the various Christian cultures celebrate Eucharist. Yet, however far apart we may be in the cultural expression of our eucharistic faith, we are at one in our practice of "excluding" certain people from the Table of the Lord. Is this what Jesus means when he commands his followers: "Do this in memory of me"?

The practice of excluding certain people from full participation in the celebration of the Eucharist has long been part of the sacramental discipline of the Christian Churches. As we will see in the final chapter of this book, the Church has an important duty and responsibility to exercise such discipline.³ My own Roman Catholic tradition has codified this discipline in the official book of the Church's legislation, *The Code of Canon Law*. This so-called "Code" (Latin: *Corpus*) has a long history, originating in the practice of the earliest ecumenical Councils, which settled matters of uncertainty and dispute by solemn pronouncements on questions of doctrine and discipline.⁴ Over the centuries other authoritative pronouncements were made and accepted by the Church catholic. A decisive stage was reached about 1140 when Gratian issued his *Decretum*, which collected the "canons." A variety of other collections led to the eventual post-Tridentine promulgation of a single printed "corpus" in general use after 1580. This was thoroughly revised and promulgated for the Catholic Church in 1917.⁵ The Second Vatican Council asked for a further revision (see *Christus Dominus* 44; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 1; *Ad Gentes* 14).⁶ It was promulgated in its revised form as recently as 25 January 1983. The Canons dealing with the admission of people to the eucharistic table read as follows:

Those who are excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion. (*Canon* 915)

A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or to receive the body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession

unless a grave reason is present and there is no opportunity of confessing; in this case the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible. (*Canon 916*)⁷

The Second Vatican Council speaks of the importance of the regular and total participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist (see especially *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 48, 55), but offers no suggestions on the discipline of “exclusion” from full participation. Thus, it was left to the legislative arm of the Church to look to these important questions. Indeed, a careful reading and interpretation of the Canons (especially *Canon 916*) indicates a sensitive understanding of the committed believer who is not conscious of his or her sinfulness, or unable, for grave reasons, to have access to sacramental reconciliation prior to the reception of the Sacrament.⁸

This legislation, with its long standing in Christian practice, leads to the reception of the Eucharist being denied to an increasing number of Catholics. Faced with the complexity of modern secular society, there are now many Catholics whose marriages are not in accord with official teaching.⁹ In Western society there are situations where almost fifty percent of Catholic marriages—regarded by the Church as belonging to its sacramental participation in the divine life—end in a breakdown in the relationship and subsequent divorce. In the majority of these situations, divorce leads to remarriage. For psychological, emotional, and financial reasons, especially when there are children from the initial marriage, remarriage is an important further step in a life-story. Remarriage is the road to the peace, happiness, and sometimes financial stability of the woman or man in question. But a divorced Catholic who has remarried is regarded as living in a situation of permanent sinfulness, and thus can never participate fully in the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁰

This is such a widespread phenomenon that bishops, priests, and believing people from all corners of the world have been seeking some easing of this prohibition. It is one of the questions that has received considerable attention from those participating in the 2014–2015 Synod of Bishops, as well as the millions who are following these debates with great interest and concern. There is also a residual group of deeply committed Catholics who struggle with the Church’s

teaching on birth control. Although this latter issue is a more private concern, it appears that many practicing Catholics no longer observe this legislation. Yet there are also some who do all in their power to live lives in which every act of sexual intercourse must be potentially open to the conception of new life, despite the emotional and financial pressures that such choices may generate. Such people will be understandably concerned as to why the Church would reconsider its teaching on something they would consider as important as divorce and remarriage.

One could add the ecumenical question of intercommunion with non-Catholic Christians, in certain circumstances, to this already long list of questions.¹¹ The Catholic Church's present legislation hinges upon whether a person is considered not fully prepared for the reception of the eucharistic Lord.¹² There are many other situations, better known to the individuals themselves and their pastors, that could be added to this list of well-known reasons for separation of a person, or even a community, from the eucharistic table.¹³

Such a disciplinary practice reflects a eucharistic theology that has its own history and tradition in the Western Church. I have used the present legislation of the Roman Catholic Church to exemplify this practice among the Christian Churches.¹⁴ All the Christian Churches have their own traditions concerning who should or should not be permitted access to the Lord's Table. Does anyone have a right to question this widespread discipline? As Xavier Léon-Dufour indicated in his 1990 foreword to an earlier version of this volume, St Paul already expressed his mind on the matter in the early 50's of the first century: there is some behavior that is intolerable at a Christian community's celebration of the supper of the Lord (see 1 Cor 11:27-34). May one compare this practice, enshrined in the official legislation of the Church, with various other cultural and historical practices that were examined by the great renewal process set in motion by the Second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church? The issue of access to the eucharistic meal was raised in the formative days of Christianity, as was the question of divorce and remarriage. Should we not look back to those Spirit-filled teachings to question the practice of excluding the broken people—those we judge as sinners—from the eucharistic table?

While never denying its crucial importance for the life of the Church, one must not divinize legislation. There are certainly laws that are “written on our hearts” (see Rom 2:14), but most of our laws are also the result of the need to formulate legislation to govern a community of human beings living within the constraints imposed by a particular history and culture. Most people today are aware that there are laws in both the Church and society that are more oppressive than creative. The very existence of an official body for the ongoing interpretation of the new Code of Canon Law is an indication of the Catholic Church’s awareness of this fact.¹⁵

There is nowadays a widespread grass-roots feeling that our current traditions concerning the admission of people to the eucharistic table need to be questioned and possibly re-thought and re-taught.¹⁶ I have been told by more than one Pastor that they act on the basis of pastoral sense. This means that, at the level of practice, people traditionally excluded from the Eucharist are now simply admitted, without further ado.¹⁷ However, it is methodologically unsound to go ahead, either theologically or pastorally, on the basis of “a widespread grass-roots feeling.”¹⁸ Many of the important renewal movements in the history of the Church often appear to have come from such “maverick” practices, but these are not sufficient in themselves. Such pastoral practices are based on one’s “feeling” about the issue. No matter how finely tuned a particular Pastor may be to the ways of the Spirit in the Church, the biblical and theological motivations for or against such practice must be considered. The Catholic Tradition cannot be renewed only on the basis of the rules of “best practice.” Christianity’s claim to be a revealed religion is central to its very being. The normative and formative roles of Scripture and Tradition for Christian theology and practice cannot be brushed aside in the face of an urgent pastoral problem. As such, the pastoral—as well as the spiritual—renewal of the Christian traditions must also have its roots in a continual reflection on the richness of the Word of God in the Bible and the great Traditions of the Church. In the light of these factors the teaching offices of the Christian Churches, adopting an attitude of listening and learning, should eventually guide their faithful as they attempt to address the increasingly complex interface between what may only be a Christian *tradition* and the challenges of contemporary Christian *life*.

A RETURN TO THE ORIGINAL DESIGN

The Christian Church, which lays claim to be the community of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, is called to a patient reflection upon the Christian Tradition in order to gain new insights into its responsibilities and challenges in an ever-changing world. An authoritative spokesman of the Catholic Christian Tradition, Pope Paul VI, stated his understanding of the process of making the Christian Church conform more closely to its original design, and yet present a relevant face to the world:

We should always wish to lead her [the Church] back to her perfect form corresponding, on the one hand to her original design and, on the other, fully consistent with the necessary development which, like a seed grown into a tree, has given to the Church her legitimate and concrete form in history. (*Ecclesiam Suam* 83)¹⁹

It is against the background of the authentic *Tradition*, which comes from a serious and critical reflection upon the Christian story, that the Christian Churches must search for a solid basis upon which to position their feet, as they wish to raise a questioning finger to *traditions* that find their way into the Church's official legislation.²⁰ Part of the Church's responsibility is continually to search out, reflect upon, and respond to its "original design." Any suggestion that the authentic Christian Tradition has in some way been "distorted" over the centuries must be carefully scrutinized by reaching back to a period and a situation before those distortions. As Rosemary Ruether has indicated:

To look back to some original base of meaning and truth before corruption is to know that truth is more basic than falsehood. ... One cannot wield the lever of criticism without a place to stand.²¹

My concern for this "original base of meaning" motivates this study of the eucharistic traditions in the New Testament, especially with regard to the situation of divorced and remarried Catholics. My attention was first drawn to the issue because of the many pastoral concerns that have troubled dedicated Christians over recent years, from the simplest to the highest in the land. There is hardly a family, a pastor, a bishop, or a pope, who does not feel the pain of the long-standing Christian tradition of "exclusion" from the eucharistic table.

However, the question at stake, the “original base of meaning,” is much deeper than the pastoral questions, important as they may be. In all Churches, practice and legislation always look to the situation of the believer who, in some way, is judged unworthy to share in this most holy of meals, and the exclusion of the sinful from such celebrations follows logically. The discussion generated by the letter of the German Bishops and the response from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in 1994 takes it for granted that the sinfulness of Christians in an unacceptable marriage excludes them from the eucharistic table. Commentary upon the discussion between the German Bishops and the Vatican is also based upon the same premise, describing the reception of the Eucharist by a divorced and remarried person as “something illicit.”²² Anxiety over this matter, and intense discussion of it, dominated the first session of the Synod of Bishops on the Family in October 2014. It has only intensified since then, as the Catholic Church prepares for the resumption of the Synod in October 2015.

It has long been unquestioned that Catholic Tradition regards the Eucharist as a unique gift of Jesus Christ to his Church, celebrated in a sacred ritual for worthy recipients of this gift. But has Eucharist always been understood as the holy celebration of a holy Church, to which only the perfect have privileged access? My concern for the pastoral question remains; but deeper questions need to be faced. Subsequent to the first session of the Synod on the Family, opposing voices have been heard. As we have seen, the German Bishops have affirmed that such teaching and practice is theologically and pastorally wrong.²³ Cardinal Walter Kasper was called upon by Pope Francis to address the Cardinals in preparation for the Synod; then and since, he has urged a more serious consideration of the biblical, theological, Christological, and Christian virtue of mercy and compassion.²⁴ On the other hand, major Vatican figures have been reported as arguing strenuously that any change in this teaching would be a betrayal of the authentic Tradition (Cardinal Raymond Burke) or, more pastorally, that suggestions of possible change should be avoided, as it will only give some people false hopes (Cardinal George Pell). Such affirmations (the German Bishops) and counter-affirmations (other leading Church figures) do not aid quality theological and pastoral reflection. Only a

carefully researched analysis of what should be regarded as authentic Catholic Tradition can aspire to discover a satisfying solution to the immediate needs of people who suffer exclusion from the eucharistic table that they long to share.

The logical starting-place in any search for the “original base of meaning” is the authoritative and revealed “Word of God” of the Bible. Yet, as Xavier Léon Dufour indicated in his Foreword, the biblical scholar alone cannot hope to provide the final solution to this difficult theological and pastoral problem. The *entire Tradition* must be subjected to a careful and critical analysis. The study that follows presents itself as a first stage in any such investigation. Christian Tradition, which flows from the traditions enshrined in Israel’s sacred books, has its explicit beginnings in the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as they have been reported in the Gospels, and the original reflection upon the Christ-event in the other literature of the New Testament, especially in the letters of Paul. As this study will show—especially in my analysis of the New Testament teaching on divorce—within the inspired pages of the New Testament itself one finds clear evidence of pastoral and theological development.²⁵ But it is not simply a question of looking back to the given of the past, as we find it in the biblical texts. Any serious Christian scholar must interpret the Bible within the Christian Tradition. Here we face one of the more serious difficulties of contemporary Christian theology and theologians. How does one creatively read the Word of God as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures while remaining loyal to the authentic Tradition of the Christian Church?²⁶ Continuing the practice of the Second Vatican Council, the way forward for the Catholic Church is a return to its sources, famously described as the process of *ressourcement* that inspired the Council.²⁷

The issue I am investigating through this study is on the cutting edge of the questions that necessarily emerge in a study that looks back to the sources of the Church’s life and practice, and measure that practice in the light of those origins. The Law of the Church is quite clear on the matter. Anyone who is in a state of sin must not approach the Eucharist. This situation is considered “illicit” in current Catholic practice. At the level of practice, while compassion may be shown to the person objectively judged as “living in sin,” the

reception of the Eucharist is forbidden. In the Catholic Christian tradition, the final articulation of this “tradition” through the Code of Canon Law, however, is not the result of the whims of the Canon lawyers. On the contrary, what they have attempted to incorporate through clear legislation is a long-respected tradition in the Catholic Church. While the majority of the other Christian Churches do not have such a clear articulation of their tradition on this matter, and the question of the divorced and remarried has long been resolved in favor of the believing Christian, most have practices to ensure that the unworthy are excluded from the eucharistic table. Does this widespread tradition reflect what the New Testament has to say about Jesus’ presence to his disciples in the Eucharist? Is this *tradition* part of the authentic Christian *Tradition*? Most text books that respond positively to that question look to Paul’s teaching on the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. But for some centuries the traditional reading of those passages as an exclusion of the unworthy has been questioned. I am raising a theological and pastoral question worthy of serious attention, but also with a great deal of care. Before any further analysis of the New Testament material, some clarification of the role the Word of God must play in its relationship with the Tradition of the Church is called for.²⁸

The difficult balance between the word of Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church can only be preserved when full consideration and respect are given to each in its uniqueness, made evident in our respect for the importance of both, in their mutuality. To use Scripture brutally in an attempt to demolish later doctrines and piety, or to use later pious practices and doctrines brutally to create forced interpretations of the New Testament, damages the Church’s presence as the sign and bearer of God’s love. Exaggerations in either direction lead to a blinkered, and therefore impoverished, understanding of the richness of the Christian Tradition in its wholeness. Such methods offend against the essential and delicate mutuality of Scripture and Tradition that, together, both create and nourish the Christian faith. A critical look at many of the Churches’ use and abuse of the Bible, the poverty of much preaching, and the imposition of religious customs that are the product of a given time, place, and culture, shows that much still remains to be done.²⁹ To paraphrase the Second Vatican

Council, the Christian Church remains at once holy and always in need of purification, following constantly the path of penance and renewal (see *Lumen Gentium* 8).

A New Testament reflection upon one of the mysteries and central practices of our faith must always reflect the mutuality that exists between Scripture and Tradition. At no stage should it presuppose later dogmas, as it must always attempt to respect the literary and historical contexts of the documents and passages analyzed, whilst keeping a critical eye on the traditions that have been formed at a later stage. To ignore them would be to fail as a scholar working within the Christian Tradition. What, then, is the task of the scholar who must reflect upon data that sometimes might question widely accepted ideas and practices?³⁰ It is essential that the Christian Churches pursue the challenge to learn from the source that nourishes their faith: Scripture and Tradition, which flow from the same divine well-spring (*Dei Verbum* 9). The temptation is always with us to lean more heavily on *either* Scripture *or* Tradition for an assessment of our life and practice of the Christian faith. Rather than looking to Scripture *and* Tradition, we tend to unwittingly set up a conflict between choosing Scripture *or* Tradition.

The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation spoke eloquently on the importance of this question:

In the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls. (*Dei Verbum* 10. See paras. 7-10.)

While the principles stated in *Dei Verbum* 10 are clear, the exact nature of the relationship that should exist between Scripture and Tradition has never been easy to define or practice. The Council addressed the question, calling for interaction and mutuality in the following important statement:

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing from the same divine well-spring, come together *in some fashion* to form one thing and move towards the same goal. (*Dei Verbum* 9. Emphasis mine.)

As the emphasized words in my citation indicate, the fact of the mutuality is affirmed, but what precisely is meant by “come together in some fashion” (Latin original: *in unum quodammodo coalescunt*)? This formula was deliberately left vague in the light of possible future ecumenical developments, but it leads to difficulties in understanding how Scripture and Tradition relate to one another. Rudolf Schnackenburg, the celebrated Catholic biblical scholar, has written of this Conciliar statement:

This formulation was a compromise which was devised to keep the way to ecumenical dialogue open, but it is quite unsatisfactory. The expression requires a much broader theological treatment.³¹

The Council document reflects the difficulties and tensions that have always existed between Scripture and Tradition. Yet Vatican II, despite the difficulties it had in finding the exact formula, has taught that Scripture and Tradition need one another, even though neither is totally at ease with the other. Tradition alone is insufficient,³² but Scripture alone can also lead us down the misleading path of a biblical fundamentalism where the Tradition is never given a voice.³³ The exact nature of the relationship between them remains the subject of theological debate, and no doubt the difficulties that the Conciliar statement has created will eventually produce a more precise understanding of this delicate relationship. Theology, however, must look to the experience of the centuries. Experience teaches us that we have Christian Scriptures today because Tradition has kept them alive. Tradition leads us to proclaim the Word of God in our liturgies, to use it for prayer and to find in it a program for authentic Christian living. This happens today because it has happened in the Christian Churches for almost two thousand years. As is well known, Christian Tradition was alive before there was ever a New Testament. It was precisely the desire to “write” some of the living Tradition that led to the formation of the New Testament. Thus, Tradition gave birth to the letters of Paul and the four Gospels, and Tradition keeps them alive and proclaimed in the heart of the Church. What is found in the New Testament is our earliest written articulation of the primitive and formative Christian Tradition.³⁴

Experience also teaches that those who are entrusted with the handing down of the Tradition can fall into the temptation of

making it an end unto itself. Such an attitude runs the danger of rendering absolute a particular cultural expression of the faith or a particular historical period in the life of the Christian Church. This understandable tendency attempts to lock the Christian Churches' life and practice into *traditions* that may have had their value in a given time and place, but which should never be equated with *the Tradition*. Such an equation (i.e., a tradition = the Tradition) stands behind many of the current difficulties from the more radically conservative side of the Church today that, in one way or another, refuses to live in a Church that is responding to the commission to preach the Gospel to all nations, guided and supported till the end of time by the presence of the risen Lord (see Mark 13:10; Matt 28:16-20). For example, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre would not accept that the Roman Catholic Church could understand itself or present itself to the world in any other way than that regulated by the teachings of the Councils of Trent and Vatican I. He made particular historical and cultural expressions into an absolute. The double-edged sword of the Word of God "piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12) has always been used to remind the institution of the Church why she was instituted in the first place. Although Tradition gave birth to Scriptures, and keeps the Bible alive in the Church, Scripture has the task of acting like a "double-edged sword," bringing comfort to the afflicted and affliction to the comfortable, when the Tradition has been exaggeratedly domesticated into historically and culturally conditioned traditions.

One instructive example of this "thorn in the side" presence of the challenge of the Word of God, found in the very early emerging world-wide Church, was the phenomenon of so-called "monks" in Egypt. They followed the lead of Antony who responded to Jesus' words as they are recorded in the Gospel of Matthew: "If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matt 19:21. See also Mark 10:21).³⁵ Antony began a movement that, in the fourth century, led remarkable numbers of simple peasant people into the desert in an attempt to

live the life that had been described in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles (see Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16). This movement was, among many other things, a “protest,” based on the Word of God, against the gradual assimilation of the Christian Church into the bosom of Roman Imperial society after Constantine. Although something of an overstatement, a contemporary historian of the early Church, William Frend, has described Antony’s movement into the desert: “Almost for the first time in three centuries the Lord’s commands were being accepted literally by Christ’s followers.”³⁶

In the midst of the continuing theological discussions of this important question, the experience of how Scripture and Tradition have in fact related over the centuries teaches an important lesson. While the Tradition keeps the Scripture alive in the Christian Church, Scripture keeps the Tradition honest.³⁷

Is our current tradition of the admission only of the “worthy” to our eucharistic celebrations an “honest” representation of what was handed down to the earliest Church in its Sacred Scriptures? I am posing a question to an important aspect of the Christian Churches’ pastoral practice that has become a part of the Roman Catholic Church’s life, encoded in its legal tradition (Canon Law). Does this practice of excluding those judged as being sinful, for whatever reason, reflect an understanding of the Church celebrating Eucharist that is faithful to the authoritative word of God as it has come down to us in the Scriptures? What follows is an attempt to reach into the earliest written articulation of the Christian Tradition in Letters of St Paul and the narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to ask: is our present practice an honest continuation of the origins of the Catholic Tradition.³⁸

POSING QUESTIONS TO THE TRADITION

Crucial to my understanding of the mutuality that exists between Scripture and Tradition is the corrective role that a critical reading of the word of the Scriptures plays in the heart of the Church.³⁹ This is only one of the many functions of the Word of God in the Church, and certainly not its most important role. First of all, the Word of God nourishes, inspires, and guides us. As the Second Vatican Council has

accurately stated, articulating a belief that is shared, each in its own way, by all the Christian communions:

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord, in so far as she never ceases, particularly in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ. (*Dei Verbum* 21)

The “corrective” role of the Scriptures that I will bring into play throughout the following study must be seen and understood within the wider and more positive terms stated in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. First and foremost, the Scriptures are a word of life and joy for all Christians.⁴⁰ As Vatican II pointed out, Christians are nourished by the mutuality of the Word of God and the gift of the Eucharist. They come from the one Table of the Lord (*Dei Verbum*, 21, 24). From that privileged position in the life of the Church, the Word of God found in the Sacred Scriptures raises questions to a tradition from which it has been long separated. What follows by no means exhausts what could be said about the relationship between the Word of God and the Eucharist, but it may guide us to deepen and enrich our contemporary understanding and practice of the Eucharist in a way that will prove helpful at this critical moment in the Church’s history, set off by the Pope Francis’ calling of the process that is the current Synod on the Family. Careful and respectful *ressourcement*—a return to the sources of our faith and practice—can only seek to guide the Church in its rediscovery of the original and originating Tradition that is articulated in the books of the New Testament.⁴¹

The analysis of the Pauline material from 1 Corinthians 10-11 that opens the exegetical chapters of this study is crucial. Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians was most likely written about 54 CE. Paul’s explicit use of an institution narrative (1 Cor 11:23-26), surrounded by reflections that depend upon the community’s understanding of “the body of the Lord,” are thus the earliest witness to the Christian tradition and practice of celebrating the meal that we have come to call “the Eucharist.”⁴² As well as its intrinsic importance as the earliest New Testament reflection upon the early Church’s celebration of Eucharist, 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 is widely used to insist on a

process of “exclusion” from the eucharistic table (see v. 28: “Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup”). This recommendation from Paul to the Corinthians calls for special attention. Care needs to be devoted to a better understanding of whom Paul was addressing, and why he was so severe in chastising their performance at their eucharistic meals.

I will subsequently devote my attention to the narratives of the two feeding miracles in the Gospel of Mark and Matthew (Mark 6:31-44; 8:1-9; Matt 14:13-21; 15:32-38), and to Luke’s remodeling of the two miracle stories into one single account (Luke 9:10-17). I will necessarily study the accounts of the last meal between Jesus and his disciples found in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mark 14:17-31; Matt 26:20-35; Luke 22:14-38) and to the special Lucan story of the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

Beyond the Synoptic tradition, there is need to look at how the Johannine practice and understanding of the Eucharist reflected John’s special use of traditions surrounding the meal that Jesus celebrated with his disciples. Many scholars find evidence of the Johannine community’s use of words of Jesus at their eucharistic celebrations in 6:51c (“The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh”). The community’s celebration of the Eucharist no doubt lies behind the Johannine version of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (John 6:1-15), and the final section on the discourse that follows (6:51c-58).⁴³ But it is often claimed that John surprisingly omits any reference to the Eucharist in his account of Jesus’ final evening with his disciples. Chapter Six will suggest that, for the purposes of this study, John 13:1-38—the account of Jesus’ meal, footwashing, and gift of the morsel—is dominated by an understanding in the Christian community of these actions as symbolic presentations of Jesus’ gifts of Baptism and Eucharist.

Many studies of the eucharistic material in the New Testament have attempted historical reconstructions of Jesus’ original meal with his disciples. Oceans of ink have been spent attempting to rediscover exactly what happened on that night. Was it a Passover meal? What were the exact words that Jesus said over the bread and then over the cup (if he used a cup)? Which of the two major traditions: Mark and Matthew (sometimes called the Jerusalem tradition) or Luke and Paul

(sometimes called the Antiochene tradition), is the more primitive.⁴⁴ These, and many similar questions, have never been finally resolved. Indeed, there is a trend in some contemporary study of the historical Jesus to claim that the reports of a final meal, during which Jesus did and said certain things with bread and wine, pointing forward to his self-gift in love, and to the future kingdom (see Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor 11:24-26) were created by the liturgical life of the early Church, and do not go back to something that happened during the life of Jesus of Nazareth. John D. Crossan, for example, points to the early instructions in the shared meal in the *Didache* 9-10 as an indication that the most primitive traditions of this meal had no knowledge of Jesus' words and actions over bread and cup.⁴⁵ The study that follows presupposes much of the work done on the historical background to our eucharistic texts, but is not concerned with the *history* of those events. Our concern throughout is the *meaning* that the early Church gave to the traditions it received concerning Jesus' self-gift in love, celebrated in their Eucharists. It takes as given that an impressive "last supper" took place, and does not delve any further into historical questions.⁴⁶

This study is, therefore, deliberately limited to a consideration of the theological and religious message of the present literary and narrative structure of 1 Corinthians 10-11 and the Gospels. I am asking what we can learn from the rediscovery of the eucharistic thought and practice of the Christians at Corinth, the Markan Church, the Matthean Church, the Lukan Church, and the Johannine Church. This is not the only way one can approach these texts; it may not even be the best way. But within the contemporary context of the Catholic Church it is important to ask these questions of the foundational New Testament Churches. The Evangelists and the Apostle Paul "received" traditions concerning the meal that Jesus shared with his disciples on the night before he died (see especially 1 Cor 11:23, where this is explicitly stated). Not one of them repeated a single fixed text in which every word was sacred and irreplaceable. They knew that they must speak the living word in a way that "translated" its deepest message to the needs of the various ecclesial communities.⁴⁷

Research into what may have been the original event that took place between Jesus and his disciples must base itself on these texts

“translated” to meet the needs of the various ecclesial communities. Without doubt, when the meal took place, the exact words and gestures used on that occasion, and the subsequent transmission of this data would be important, if ever discovered. But an indication of the speculative nature of this difficult task is found in the fact that the two great experts in this area, Joachim Jeremias and Heinz Schürmann (now both deceased), had given up their life-long attempts to establish this data definitively.⁴⁸ Less speculative, and at least equally as important, is the task of reading what each New Testament author proclaims to his audience by means of a story. In fact, when it comes to the Eucharist, all the New Testament authors, including Paul, tell the story of Jesus’ sharing a meal. This study turns its attention, almost exclusively, to the message of Paul, and each of the Evangelists.⁴⁹ A surprising unity of narrative purpose found across these different authors from the early Church raises an historical question. If the same theme is expressed in a variety of ways across the New Testament, it may have had its origins in the many meals the disciples of Jesus shared with their master, culminating in a final meal that became the first of many other meals shared by the communities of the risen Lord. Behind the narratives found in Paul and the Four Gospels lies the *Tradition* of the earliest Church. The Tradition existed before the written word; the New Testament is the earliest inspired written witness to the Tradition. These historical considerations indicate the importance of the teaching of Vatican II: there cannot be two sources of Revelation; Scripture and Tradition come from the same divine well-spring (*Dei Verbum* 9).

CONCLUSION

On the basis of 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, most Christian Churches have developed an understanding of the Eucharist as the place of encounter between Jesus and the worthy. They differ in their legislation concerning who is or is not “worthy.” The study that follows, limited to an analysis of a biblical tradition that all the Christian Churches regard as Revelation—as the Word of God—will indicate that Jesus’ eucharistic presence is for his failed and failing disciples. As we will see, surprisingly, this also applies to Paul’s audience in Corinth, although this audience is made up of disciples of a later generation. A study

of the disciples of Jesus at the Eucharist forms part of the broader theology of discipleship in the New Testament. The authors of the New Testament used their theologies of discipleship to address the Christian community as such. The presentation of the disciples at the Eucharist does not primarily focus its interest upon an encounter between Jesus and the broken, sinful *individual* Christian. In Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, and Paul it is with a *broken Church* that the Lord breaks the bread of his body. “Disciples” in the Gospel stories are not just founding figures from the distant past. For the original authors of the Gospels they were characters in the story of Jesus who addressed the members of early Christian communities. As we continue to read the story of Jesus, the use of these characters will continue to address the Church throughout its history. It is in the experience of the disciples of the Gospel stories that the disciples of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries will discover their own experience of faith and sinfulness.

Studies of this nature can be an exhilarating rediscovery of the breadth, depth, and richness of our Christian tradition. The process of returning to the sources of our faith, asking questions on the basis of what this uncovers, is an aspect of the continued vitality of the Church. Without it we fail in our response to the commission of the risen Jesus (see Matt 20:16-20; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21-23), and subsequently run the risk of falling into a stagnant dogmatism that may have a glorious past but may not address the challenges of our present and our immediate future. As Raymond Brown has written: “Even when finally fixed in a formula, tradition does not stifle further insight derived from a deeper penetration of Scripture.”⁵⁰

The questioning of traditional practices through a careful use of the Scriptures is a delicate but necessary task in a human institution that always runs the risk of “distorting” its original Tradition. In his 1969 commentary on the difficult paragraph of *Dei Verbum* already mentioned (*Dei Verbum* 9), Joseph Ratzinger raises the urgency of the need to face these “distortions” with the correcting role of the Scriptures:

We shall have to acknowledge the truth of the criticism that there is, in fact, no explicit mention of the possibility of a distorting tradition and of the place of Scripture as an element within the Church that is also critical of tradition, which means that a most important side of the problem, as shown by the history of the Church—and perhaps the real crux of the *ecclesia semper reformanda*—has been

overlooked. ... That this opportunity has been missed can only be regarded as an unfortunate omission.⁵¹

In a later article in the same volume, commenting on *Dei Verbum* 23, which deals with the use of the Scriptures in the life of the Church, the then Professor Ratzinger wrote:

A reference to the ecclesial nature of exegesis, on the one hand, and to its methodological correctness on the other, again expresses the inner tension of Church exegesis, which can no longer be removed, *but must be simply accepted as tension.*⁵²

It is within this tension that we must stand, not trying to ease away its pain by either a rigid and unbending dogmatism or by an uncritical and unfounded “change for the sake of change” approach.⁵³ The exegete cannot resolve this difficult problem. It is a task that the entire Christian Church, each community under the guidance of its own teaching authority, and all the Christian communities in deep dialogue with one another, must face.

Under the leadership of Pope Francis, the Roman Catholic Church is courageously examining its conscience on this matter as I write. There is a deep sense within the Catholic Church that something must be done for people whose marriages have failed, who have remarried, and who are subsequently excluded from participating fully in the eucharistic celebration. The study of Paul and the Four Gospels may indicate that Jesus’ eucharistic presence is well described as *A Body Broken for a Broken People*. The Word of God, as we have it in the Scriptures of the New Testament, also has important instructions on the question of marriage and divorce in the teaching of Jesus, and in the subsequent assimilation of that teaching within the Church’s earliest communities (1 Cor 7:8-14; Mark 10:1-12; Matt 19:1-12; Luke 16:18).

Is there any correlation between the Eucharist as “for the broken” and the marginalized—as we will attempt to uncover it in a study of the relevant texts—and the response of the contemporary Church to the divorced and the remarried? This question touches a fundamental aspect of today’s Christian, and especially Catholic, life and practice. Does the Christian Tradition concerning the presence of the Lord to the broken and marginalized in our celebration of the Eucharist have anything to say to those whose marital situations generate “exclusion”?

Has their need for communion with the Lord (vertical) and with the Christian community (horizontal) in the eucharistic celebration been “distorted” (Ratzinger) by contemporary Catholic practice? A concluding chapter will offer a study of the relevant passages in Paul and in the Gospels, providing a pondered, and I trust helpful, response to that urgent question.

NOTES

1 For a study of the historical development of the theology and celebration of the Eucharist in the Western tradition, see Josef Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origin and Development*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, Christian Classics (New York: Thomas More Publishing, 1986). For a broader study of the early period, see Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

2 However much such practice is taken for granted nowadays, there is evidence that such was not always and everywhere the case. See Michael Theobald, “Eucharist and Passover: the two ‘loci’ of the liturgical commemoration of the Last Supper in the early Church,” in *Engaging with C.H. Dodd on the Gospel of John: Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. Tom Thatcher and Catrin H. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 231-54.

3 See below, pp. 228-232.

4 Behind current canonical legislation on marriage and access to the eucharistic table lies a complex history surrounding the sacramentality of marriage, which came late in Christian history, and the question of the individual’s suitability for the reception of the eucharistic species. Although they had an earlier history, both were defined by the Catholic Church, in response to the Protestant Reform, at the Council of Trent in the 16th century. These questions will be briefly documented later in this study.

5 For a concise historical survey, with further bibliography, see the articles “Canon Law,” and “*Corpus Iuris Canonici*,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Frank L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 231, 349.

6 I will use the Latin titles for documents of the Second Vatican Council.