

## **EUCHARIST – CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY**

While answering the question: what is the Eucharist?, the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council tellingly states that „the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian life. In the Eucharist, the sanctifying action of God in our regard and our worship of him reach their high point. It contains the whole spiritual good of the Church, Christ himself, our Pasch. Communion with divine life and the unity of the People of God are both expressed and effected by the Eucharist. Through the Eucharistic celebration we are united already with the liturgy of heaven and we have a foretaste of eternal life” (no. 274)<sup>1</sup>.

The celebration of the Paschal mystery, understood in this way, enables man to participate in the mystery of salvation from the incarnation through passion, death and resurrection, till the sending of the Holy Spirit and the *parousia*, that is the second coming of Christ in glory, and the fulfillment of this celebration in eternity. Reflecting on the afore outlined saving events, at first we shall present the paschal dimension of the institution of the Eucharist, next I will show the Eucharistic celebration in the power of the Holy Spirit and draw attention to the presence of Christ as our Pasch during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and lastly, I will demonstrate the Eucharist as the realization of *parousia*, that is, as an eschatological sign of the new heaven and new earth.

### **1. Paschal dimension of the institution of the Eucharist**

We owe the description of the institution of the Eucharist to St. Paul and the synoptics. It cannot be passed over that in the light of the Gospel the paschal dimension of the Eucharist originates from the spiritual orientation and the whole mission of Jesus, in accor-

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<sup>1</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1324-1327; 1407 Hereafter CCC.

dance with the words, „I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Lk 22:15). This desire was, so to speak, the complement to many common meals, in which not only the disciples but also sinners and tax collectors participated, and to whom, first of all, Jesus presented his saving message (cf. Mk 2:16; Mt 9: 10-13; 11:19; Lk 19:1-10). The table community, which is a sign of solidarity and closeness not just in the Jewish setting, in the case of the gathering around Jesus, presented the ultimate unity of people with God and with one another in the heavenly kingdom (cf. Mt 8:11; 22:1-14). Saint John, the Evangelist to whom we owe the elaborate description of the miraculous feeding of crowds of people and Eucharistic speech (Jn 6:1-15. 22-73), cites the meaningful words that Jesus spoke in the synagogue of Capernaum, „I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (J 6:51). Undoubtedly, these words were to prepare for the institution of the Eucharist, and Jesus consciously chose the Passover as the right time to do it.

From the context of the aforementioned *Eucharistic Speech* one can conclude that even the disciples did not understand fully Jesus’ words at that time. They comprehended the value of the institution of the Eucharist as the new Passover of Christ and Church only after his death and resurrection, thanks to the so called Christophanies. Ultimately they needed that light which was given to them on the Pentecost day. The Holy Spirit, leading the people of God to the whole truth, constantly testifies to Christ who is our Pasch, in order to confirm us in the apostolic faith in the Eucharistic presence of our Lord, who, having passed to the glory of resurrection, unceasingly gathers everyone around his table on the Paschal banquet. The fact that Christ’s Passover contains in itself – apart from the passion and death – also his resurrection is each time reminded by the acclamation of the congregation after the transubstantiation, „We proclaim your resurrection”, in which the mystery of Jesus’ passion and death finds its fulfillment. “It is as the living and risen One that Christ can become in the Eucharist the «bread of life» (Jn 6:35, 48), the «living bread»” (Jn 6:51)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (hereafter EEuch), no. 14.

This truth is clearly confirmed by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which states that the Eucharist is a Paschal Banquet, because Christ, fulfilling his Passover in the sacramental way, gives us his Body and his Blood, offered as food and drink, and in his Sacrifice unites us with himself and with one another<sup>3</sup>. According to John Paul II, in „the paschal event and the Eucharist which makes it present throughout the centuries, there is a truly enormous «capacity» which embraces all of history as the recipient of the grace of the redemption”<sup>4</sup>. This thought coincides with the intuition of Philo of Alexandria, for whom the events of Israel’s history of salvation are not confined to „history and chronology, but are accomplished on the highest level of meaning. And in this sense the journey constitutes for Him a «point of convergence» of all the great religious experiences of the Israelite nation. On this spiritual level the journey of Exodus links spontaneously with Abraham’s journey from Chaldean Ur, Enoch’s journey, the journey of proselytes abandoning the pagan myths to live in the light of truth, so that they could accomplish this ceaseless journey «from creation to the One uncreated, from the world to the Creator and Father of the world”<sup>5</sup>

Although the solemn character of the Last Supper gives hardly any certainty whether it was a fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover meal or – to the contrary – if with Benedict XVI one may claim that it is not part of the Passover<sup>6</sup>, this „neither changes in any way the essential sense of the Last Supper nor detracts anything from the paschal character of the Christian theology of the Eucharist”<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI confirms in the post-synodal apostolic adoration *Sacramentum caritatis* (hereafter SC) the idea of the paschal character of both the Last Supper and the Eucharist celebrated each time, as he writes: „It interprets the rites in the light

<sup>3</sup> See, CCC 1382-1384; 1391-1396.

<sup>4</sup> EEuch, no. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *De premiis*, 16-17 (Enoch’s journey); *De virtutibus*, 102; *Quis heres*, 98. Cited in: R. Cantalamessa, *La pasqua della nostra salvezza*, Roma 1997, pp. 59-60.

<sup>6</sup> See, J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, In: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, Doubleday, New York 1991, p. 433. Cited in: J. Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, part II *Od wjazdu do Jerozolimy do Zmartwychwstania*, Kielce 2011, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha z Chrystusem*, vol. 2, Lublin 1987, p. 391.

of the events of our salvation, in accordance with the Church's living tradition. The celebration of the Eucharist, in its infinite richness, makes constant reference to salvation history. In Christ crucified and risen, we truly celebrate the one who has united all things in himself (cf. Eph 1:10). From the beginning, the Christian community has interpreted the events of Jesus' life, and the Paschal Mystery in particular, in relation to the entire history of the Old Testament"<sup>8</sup>. This Christians feel to be fulfilled in the very death of Jesus. Therefore, St. John „shows the beginning of the Eucharist not in the paschal banquet, but in the death on the cross, from which comes the gift of salvation. «Blood and water» coming out from His pierced side are John's symbol of the Eucharist and baptism (cf. Jn 19:14; 1Jn 5:6-8)“<sup>9</sup>. Anyway, the so-called „Remnant of Israel” that – faithful to Christ's commandment from the Upper Room – started the Eucharistic practice undoubtedly „was granted the Passover whose memory it celebrated. When the Jewish Passover was finishing in 70 A.D., there was already the Christian Passover“<sup>10</sup>.

Closer attention should be paid to the double orientation in understanding the paschal origin of the Eucharist. On the one hand „the words of institution link the Eucharist with the mystery of the death on the cross («body given away», «blood poured out»). On the other hand, already at the beginning of the Church appears the rite of «breaking the bread» (Acts 2:42; 20:7) and eating it. Nothing points to its connection with the cross. Rather it refers to the resurrection [...]. The model of the second type of experiencing the Eucharist would be Christ's meetings with His disciples after the resurrection (Mk 16:14; Lk 24: 30.42; Acts 10:41)“<sup>11</sup>.

In fact, both these orientations are complementary. So the Eucharist, as a celebration of the paschal mystery, in its very centre contains the thought of the victorious death of Christ, His resurrection and expectation of His coming in glory. In John Paul II's encyclical on the Eucharist we read that Saint Ambrose reminded

<sup>8</sup> SC 64 a; see, M. Rusecki, *Formuły wiary i hymny liturgiczne w kerygmacie paschalnym*, Roczniki Teologiczne 52,9(2005), pp. 37-50.

<sup>9</sup> W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha...*, p. 392.

<sup>10</sup> R. Cantalamessa, *La pasqua...*, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha...*, p. 393.

the newly-initiated of this very fact, applying the resurrection to their lives: „Today Christ is yours, yet each day he rises again for you” (*De sacramentis*, V, 4, 26: CSEL 73, 70). Saint Cyril of Alexandria also stressed that sharing in the sacred Mysteries „is a true confession and a remembrance that the Lord died and returned to life for us and on our behalf” (*In Ioannis Evangelium*, XII, 20: PG 74, 726)<sup>12</sup>. We find a similar thought in Saint John Chrysostom.

Ultimately the new Passover and new Exodus constitute the whole life and work of Jesus, „our paschal lamb [who] has been sacrificed” (1Cor 5:7), and His resurrection is a new „spiritual” condition, in which the Christian Passover is realized thanks to the Eucharistic celebration. It is worth mentioning that many authors, not only avoid mentioning the Jewish Passover in this context, but shun „even the thought of Christ’s (or a human’s) passing from death to life. They rather notice Christ’s «passover» in the very Eucharistic event, during which bread and wine become His Flesh and Blood. The Eucharist is the true Passover (*transitus*) of Christ who «passes over» via bread and wine and in this way is present in the Church [...]. Therefore the Church always celebrates the «holy day of holy days» not in any other way but only via the celebration of the Eucharistic Pasch. The Eucharistic celebration preaches and «announces» (1Cor 11:26) the Lord’s Death till He comes. Preaching of the death of Jesus as Lord is the proclamation of the victory already accomplished in the resurrection. The Eucharistic proclamation is a mighty confession of the paschal faith”<sup>13</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the celebration of the paschal mystery so understood evokes amazement which, according to John Paul II, “should always fill the Church assembled for the celebration of the Eucharist. But in a special way it should fill the minister of the Eucharist. For it is he who, by the authority given him in the sacrament of priestly ordination, effects the consecration. It is he who says with the power coming to him from Christ in the Upper Room: «This is my body which will be given up for you. This is the cup of my blood, poured out for you...». The priest says these words, or rather

<sup>12</sup> EEuch 14.

<sup>13</sup> W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha...*, p. 397; cf. P. Grelot, *Le repas seigneurial – 1Co 11:20*, in: *La Pâque du Christ. Mystère de salut. Mélanges F.X. Durrwell*, Paris 1982, pp. 203-236.

he puts his voice at the disposal of the One who spoke these words in the Upper Room and who desires that they should be repeated in every generation by all those who in the Church ministerially share in his priesthood”<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. Eucharistic celebration of the Passover in the power of the Holy Spirit

Beginning with such a vivid centre as the Eucharist, Lord Christ stays with us as our Pasch by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov notices, the Holy Spirit reveals the work of Christ in the Church, identifying the Eucharist with the Last Supper and re-presenting the whole paschal mystery together with the Pentecost<sup>15</sup>. This was noted only by the fathers of the Vatican II, because preconciliar theology had concentrated first of all on the presence of Christ under species of bread and wine. Today much stress is put on the personal unification with Christ, whose resurrected flesh is revived and reviving in Eucharistic communion<sup>16</sup>. „Moreover, in the holy communion one receives the Holy Spirit. If receiving the Eucharist unites us with Christ, it is so because the already «spiritual flesh» is «the Spirit that gives life» (cf. Jn 6:63). Thanks to the Holy Spirit Christ entered into glory and can give himself in the Eucharist, while a Christian can receive him only then, when he has become transformed by the Holy Spirit and made worthy of this Communion. In order to attain the vital communion with the Lord, the believer has to receive also the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist”<sup>17</sup> This truth is confirmed by

<sup>14</sup> EEuch 5; cf. I. Juśkiewicz, A. Bylinka, *Kapłaństwo w służbie wspólnocie wiernych mocą Paschy Chrystusa uobecnianej w Eucharystii*, Teologiczne Studia Siedleckie 4(2007), pp. 43-52; R. Selejdak, *Kapłan sługą Eucharystii*, Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne 34(2006), pp. 147-162.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. F. Lambiasi, *Lo Spirito Santo: mistero e presenza. Per una sintesi di pneumatologia*, Bologna 1987, pp. 236-253 H. Paprocki, *Obietnica Ojca, Doświadczenie Ducha w Kościele Pawosławnym*, Bydgoszcz 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. CCC 1392; cf. A. Grzelak, *Teksty liturgii posoborowej o działaniu Ducha Świętego w misterium paschalnym*, Studia Gnesnansia 19(2005), pp. 93-111.

<sup>17</sup> J. Warzeszak, *Pneumatologia współczesna*, Warszawa 2009, p. 189; cf. A. Czaja, *Duch Święty darem Eucharystii*, Roczniki Teologiczne 52,2(2005), pp. 37-47.

the official document of Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of Year 2000 in which it states that „it is the Holy Spirit that brings man to Christ, whereas Christ brings the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the general rule of the salvific economy: wherever the Holy Spirit is, there is Christ, and where Christ is, there is the Holy Spirit”<sup>18</sup>.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist and communion with him as a necessary condition of sharing the paschal mystery of Christ is strongly emphasized by St. Ephram who, in his *Speech on the Holy Week* states: „Whoever eats [Christ’s Body] with faith, through it he eats the fire of the Holy Spirit [...]. And now you will eat the clean and unblemished Passover, bread unleavened and perfect, which was kneaded and baked by the Holy Spirit, wine mixed with Fire and the Holy Spirit” (IV, 4)<sup>19</sup> John Paul II was convinced that, thanks to so understood, the Holy Spirit – via the Eucharist – enables us to enhance the „inner man” and teaches individuals and communities „to find the divine sense of human life”<sup>20</sup>, uniting them in the image of the Divine Persons „in truth and charity” (GS 24).

Finding the divine sense of life is possible only because the Holy Spirit, actualizing in the Eucharist the Passover of Christ, is his Interpreter, testifies to him, and enables us to get to know and understand him better<sup>21</sup>. It so happens thanks to the epiclesis which, basically, the whole celebration of the Eucharist is. Due to the Holy Spirit the bread and wine put on the altar receive a kind of „anointment” by grace and immortality. Thus the Eucharist as the celebration of the paschal mystery becomes an event analogical to that which happened at the moment of Christ’s resurrection in the

<sup>18</sup> *Pełna jest ziemia Twego Ducha, Panie (The Holy Spirit. Lord and Giver Of Life, London 1997)*. The official document of Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of Year 2000, Katowice 1997, p. 135f.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in: *Pełna jest ziemia...*, p. 136; cf. A. Czaja, *Duch Święty darem Eucharystii*, *Roczniki Teologiczne* 52,2(2005), p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 62; cf. R. Ptak, *Eucharystia – centrum życia chrześcijańskiego* *Benedykt XVI o Eucharystii jako misterium życia w Sacramentum Caritatis*, *Teologia w Polsce. Nowa seria* 1,1(2007), pp. 87-98.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. W. Świerżawski, *Uświęcenie i kult w Duchu Świętym*, w: *Napełnieni Duchem Świętym*, ed. B. Przybylski, Poznań 1982, p. 76.

glorified body. Therefore, the Orthodox theology strongly emphasizes that bread and wine are transformed and deified by the power of the Holy Spirit in the same way as the humanity of Christ was transformed and deified in the paschal events<sup>22</sup>.

As fr. Waław Hryniewicz notes, the oldest epicleses did not contain a request for the transformation of the gifts but for the revelation of Christ's presence – for sanctification and unification with God together with all those who receive His Body and Blood thanks to the Holy Spirit descending on them. It signifies that the aim of the Eucharistic celebration as a paschal mystery is not the transformation of the gifts for itself, but sanctification of those who fully participate in the celebration. Moreover, the Holy Spirit transforms the holy gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ in order to enable the growth of Christ's Body – the Church. The dynamism of the Eucharistic epiclesis is ultimately expressed in the incorporation of the faithful in the mystery of Christ's Passover. Thus the epiclesis appears as the completion of the mystery of the Eucharist, just as sending of the Holy spirit was the completion of the economy of salvation effected by Christ<sup>23</sup>. Thereby the Eucharist reflects the „structure” of the whole economy of salvation, accomplishing it in its trinitarian<sup>24</sup>, christological<sup>25</sup> and – presented in this paragraph – pneumatological<sup>26</sup> aspect.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. W. Hryniewicz, *Sakrament Paschy i Pięćdziesiątnicy. Tajemnica Eucharystii w świetle dialogu katolicko-prawosławnego* w: *Eucharystia i posłannictwo*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 42-43; J. S. Gajek, *Eucharystia w liturgii i teologii Kościoła wschodniego* w: *Eucharystia – miłość i dziękczynienie*, Lublin 1990, p. 90; S. Ropiak, *Mistyka Eucharystii według encykliki „Deus caritas est” Benedykta XVI*, *Liturgia Sacra* 12,2(2006), pp. 255-273.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha...*, p. 439.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. Kowalczyk, *Eucharystia jako Objawienie Trójcy Świętej*, *Roczniki Teologiczne* 52,2(2005), pp. 49-55; M. Antoniewicz, *Trynitarny wymiar Eucharystii według świętej Faustyny Kowalskiej*, *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne*, 17(2004), pp. 171-179; I. Bokwa, *Trynitarny wymiar Eucharystii według Hansa Ursa von Balthasara*, *Perspectiva* 4, 1(2005), pp. 5-17.

<sup>25</sup> M. J. J. Menken, *Eucharistology or Chrystology*, in: *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. A. Culpepper, Leiden 1997, p. 189.

<sup>26</sup> A. Czaja, *Eucharystia jako dar Ducha Ożywiciela*, in: *To czyńcie na moją pamiątkę. Eucharystia w perspektywie ekumenicznej*, ed. L. Górka, Warszawa 2005, pp. 20-37.



### 3. Personal presence of Christ – our Pasch in the Eucharist

Assuredly all aspects of the Eucharist derive their content from the mystery of Christ's presence. Blessed John Paul II has taught that what is at stake here is the presence „called «real», not in an exclusive way, as if to suggest that other forms of Christ's presence are not real, but *par excellence*, because Christ thereby becomes substantially present, whole and entire, in the reality of His body and blood. Faith demands that we approach the Eucharist fully aware of approaching Christ himself. It is precisely His presence which gives the other aspects of the Eucharist – as meal, as memorial of the Paschal Mystery, as eschatological anticipation – a significance which goes far beyond mere symbolism. The Eucharist is a mystery of presence, the perfect fulfillment of Jesus' promise to remain with us until the end of the world”<sup>27</sup>

To stand before Christ is to encounter him as a person to person. Thus, the presence by *antonomasia* means the personal presence of Christ, our Pasch, who after His glorious resurrection and ascension sits as glorified on the right side of the Father. The personal presence of resurrected Christ is, according to fr. Waclaw Hryniewicz, „an immeasurably rich notion impossible analyze in detail. It is about the presence of a person to a person, only possible only between persons. The presence is a kind of bonding, a spiritual communication and permeation of persons. It is effected undoubtedly through a human body, without which it could not express itself in the open. Also material things help to effect it, though then they receive a new dimension. They become actualizing signs of this presence. It is known that material things are present in a spatial manner. This also applies to human persons, when no interpersonal bond exists between them; they remain alien and distant, although spatially there is no distance between them. Such a presence borders on absence. For a real personal presence space is by no means an obstacle. The distance may even increase a desire to unite and-

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<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine*, no. 16. In this passage of the letter the pope refers to the well-known encyclical of Paul VI from August 3, 1965, meaningfully titled *Mysterium fidei*, no. 39.

deepen faithfulness to the other person. But then personal presence overcomes space and time”<sup>28</sup>.

To these words fr. Hryniewicz adds that the this approach to presence does not undermine the fact that „personal presence finds its fullest expression in the physical and spatial presence of the other person on condition that they share the same desire of a mutual bond and closeness. Without the desire of a mutual bond there is no real presence. The expression of this desire is often a gift or any other sign of friendship and love. In this way – apart from the body – also material things are included in the circle of the interpersonal bond and become signs that actualize or deepen the personal presence”<sup>29</sup>

In the context of the Eucharist as a paschal mystery it must be added that only the death and resurrection made Jesus „free” himself from the spatial frame, becoming completely present<sup>30</sup>. However, this presence actualizes itself in a gift and aims at the Eucharistic communion, that is, a full sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ and the Church.

Here appears a soteriological understanding of the Eucharist, preserved in the Eastern tradition, which strongly emphasizes man’s sharing in the glorified and life-giving humanity of Christ, offered to people as food.<sup>31</sup> A characteristic „expression here is not «to sacrifice the Pasch» but «to eat the Pasch». St. Ephram the Syrian even puts into the Saviour’s mouth the following words: «From now on you will eat an unblemished and clean Pascha, that is Bread, perfect leaven, which the Holy Spirit kneaded and baked.»” (*Sermo de hebdomada santca*, 2,10 [Lamy, I, p. 390]). Thanks to Origen, the so understood identification of the Passover and the Eucharist is also close to Alexandrine tradition. However, Origen’s genius has accomplished something more, namely „a difficult synthesis of the two notions of Passover and Eucharist in the Eucharist as *viaticum*, that is as the antitype of manna (beside

<sup>28</sup> W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha...*, p. 417.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.; cf. A. Nadbrzeżny, *Osobowa obecność Chrystusa w Eucharystii*, *Roczniki Teologiczne* 52, 2(2005), pp. 57-70.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. F-X Durwell, *Eucharystia sakrament paschalny*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 55-57.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. W. Hryniewicz, *Pascha Chrystusa w dziejach człowieka i wszechświata*, vol. 3, Lublin 1991, p. 351.

the antitype of a paschal lamb). In other words, the Eucharist is conceived as food for those who come from Egypt to the Promised Land, as *cibus viatorum*<sup>32</sup>. As Eucharistic Bread it becomes then the type of our humanity, transformed into the glorified humanity of Christ, while any paschal docetism should be excluded since the resurrected Christ is present in the Eucharist in a more bodily way than ever before. Moreover, due to His perfect corporality, the Risen one incorporates the whole world and the whole world is incorporated in him (cf. Eph 4:10)<sup>33</sup>.

Father Waław Hryniewicz suggests that the aim of the Eucharist as celebration of the paschal mystery and of the personal unification with the Saviour comes closer by a reference to the marital union in which the intimate relation between a man and a woman as one flesh is essential, for Christ, who gathers the faithful, gives them himself under the species of bread and wine, and invites to sharing the communion with God and people<sup>34</sup>. It proves ultimately that the aim of the Eucharist is fulfilled in the personal bond between the giver and the favoured ones thanks to the Body of Christ which allows communication and a mutual bonding. Becoming our Pasch, the Christ resurrected bodily, but bodily in a spiritual way, enables his sacramental meeting and reception into one's heart. In this way God realizes His promise to be present, as announced in an imperfect way in the Jewish Passover.

It has to be underlined once more that the Eucharist as a celebration of the paschal mystery is realised in the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit, while the Church is understood as a community of faith, hope and perfect unity with risen Christ. In the Eucharist the Church effectuates itself most fully, because the Eucharistic presence of Christ exceeds an other kinds of His presence in the Church and world. The one who gave himself and left this world, through the saving mission of the Church can offer His presence to all people. No wonder that the Vatican II in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church recalled that the Eucharist figures at

<sup>32</sup> R. Cantalamessa, *Pacha naszego...*, p. 210, cf. W. Hryniewicz, *Eucharystia - sakrament paschalny*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 75,101(1983), pp. 231-248.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. F-X Durwell, *Eucharystia...*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha...*, p. 419. However, using the matrimonial analogy, familiar already to Syrian fathers, one cannot move too far.

the beginning, in the centre, and in the final phase of the process of the Church's becoming. „Having stated that «the Church – that is, the kingdom of Christ – already present in mystery grows visibly through the power of God in the world» (LG 3), and trying somehow to answer the question, «How it grows?», it adds, «As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ» (cf. 1Cor 10:17) is both expressed and brought about (LG 3)»<sup>35</sup>. Moreover, the Eucharist, which contains the glorified Body of the Resurrected, brings about the transformation of our mortality like Christ's, according to whose image a human is recreated. Thus „one has to feed on the transforming Body of the Resurrected in order to undergo more and more the activity of Christ's Spirit, who slowly shapes our humanity according to the Truth and Life of His humanity»<sup>36</sup>.

Presenting the synthesis of the teaching on the Eucharist, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy gives a whole list of its names. We read there: „At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us” (SC 47). In the next paragraph of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* the following words are found: „The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's

<sup>35</sup> EEuch 21; cf. M. Piszczak, *Eucharystia – uczestnictwo w tajemnicy Kościoła*, Anamnesis 11,43(2005), pp. 60-63.

<sup>36</sup> G. Martelet, *Zmartwychwstanie. Eucharystia. Człowiek*, Warszawa 1976, p. 217.

body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all” (SC48).

It is worth returning to the last encyclical of John Paul II, meaningfully called *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: „The Church draws her life from the Eucharist” – these are the first words of this document. What is hiding behind them? On the very first pages of the encyclical the pope writes about what is the foundation of the Christian teaching, namely that the Church originates from the paschal mystery, that is from the event of passion, death and resurrection of Christ. This mystery – as appears from the present paragraph of our reflection – is celebrated during each Holy Mass. The Church originates from the Eucharist; without it would not exist. What is contained in the Eucharist is the cause of the very existence and mission of the Church. The last encyclical of blessed John Paul II recalls that through the paschal mystery there is a causative relationship between the Eucharist and Church. But the Eucharist is first here – due to the personal and integral presence of the Resurrected Lord<sup>37</sup>

#### **4. Celebrating the paschal mystery of the Eucharist as anticipation of the Parousia and eternal life**

To the Eucharist understood as the celebration of the paschal mystery refer fully the words of St. Paul the Apostle, „While we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord” (2 Cor 5, 6). It proves that the „Eucharist of the Church is the Eucharist of the way and not of the ultimate fulfillment of closeness and community of Christ. There is a joyful «already» in it, overcoming His leaving from the world, and also a «not yet» arousing the hope that the way of pilgrimage must unfailingly reach its goal. By the power of the resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit Christ grants a gift

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. K. Wojtkiewicz, *Integralna obecność Chrystusa w Eucharystii według Czesława Bartnika*, Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny, 13, 1(2005), pp. 199-210.

of His proximity. This gift points, however, to the reality of the future world in which this presence will not be hidden. The Eucharistic gift is an eschatological sign of this future world<sup>38</sup>. Thus the Eucharist introduces us to the realm of the *parousia*, namely the ultimate meeting with the Resurrected. The *parousia* means, beyond doubt, his saving presence, and even a peculiar „intrusion” of Christ’s paschal mystery in the human fate and the salvific destination of our world as well as the whole universe.

In one way, the Eucharist presents the dynamic and immanent actualization of the Parousia, and in another way, the return of man and the whole world to God, because Christ – our Pasch, by the light of his resurrection, brightens the universe so as to fill it with himself and make his own cosmic body<sup>39</sup>. These things together cause that in the paschal celebration of the Eucharist the „world’s future is already present, it is already pointing to the final state of the creation. The material world will not be annihilated, but will undergo a glorious transformation at the end of time, when the new heaven and new earth come into being (2P 3: 14; cf. Acts 3: 19-21)”<sup>40</sup>, in which the presence of Christ – our new Pasch will not be hidden any longer. However, one has to admit that the Eucharist, even though it actualizes the already effectuated redemption, is only a sign of the salvation that is coming, leading assuredly to the full eschatological presence. In comparison with that fullness of presence, the Eucharist of the pilgrim Church is called, in a certain manner Christ’s specific absence which is still heading towards its aim. The apparent paradox of the Lord’s proximity and distance does not obscure the truth that Christ gives himself to all people always and everywhere, in full openness, revealing more and more the yet hidden fullness of salvation by the pledge of future glory, gift of happiness of the saved and transformation of the universe<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> W. Hryniewicz, *Nasza Pascha...*, p. 422.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. W. Beinert, *Christus und der Kosmos*, Freiburg i. Br. 1974; W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „Pamiętka” Pana*, Kraków 1980, pp. 91-92.

<sup>40</sup> J. Grześkowiak, *Eucharystia. Człowiek. Świat*, Włocławek 1997, p. 232.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. W. Hryniewicz, *Pascha Chrystusa...*, s. 487; *ibid.*, *Duch Święty. Sakramenty. Człowiek. Ku spotkaniu tradycji chrześcijaństwa Wschodu i Zachodu*, Ateneum Kapłańskie 72,75(1980), pp. 231-248, M. Kowalczyk, *Eucharystyczna przemiana człowieka i świata*, *Communio* 25,6(2005), pp. 147-162.

The new heaven and earth evoke the cosmic dimension of the *parousia*, which in the context of the Eucharist needs to acknowledge that the „renewal of all things” first of all concerns man whose present state undergoes destruction and must become different in order to live eternally (cf. 1Cor 15:50). Thus, the first aspect of the Parousia is the universal resurrection of the dead which is accomplished by the power of risen Christ and the active bonding between him and all those who leave this world in the peace of soul, full of faith, hope, and love (cf. Jn 6:39; 6:54). Referring to the Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith on some eschatological issues, fr. Lucjan Balter has adapted its interpretation of Mary’s Assumption to all the dead, as they leave at the moment of their death for the Father’s house. In an article on the belief in the bodily resurrection, fr. Balter has recalled that „in the Holy Masses for the deceased the Church does not pray for any longer for the souls of the dead, but just for people, for the dead, expressing also prayerful hope for their resurrection on the last day, which in the light of Jesus’ utterances, written down at least in the Johanne gospel (cf. Jn 5:21.24.28ff; 6:40.44.54), does not have to be identified with the day of the end of the world, but can also mean the moment of man’s death and his personal meeting with resurrected Christ”<sup>42</sup>. What counts in this reasoning is paying attention to the ultimate aim of the Parousia, which is to lead humanity and the whole world to the full unity with the Triune God, through the personal meeting with resurrected Christ at the moment of death. Referring to the blessed Pope John Paul II, who at the hour of his death united the sacrifice of his life with Christ’s sacrifice in the Holy Mass, celebrated at his bed, we cannot doubt that the saving fruit of a personal meeting with the Resurrected One implies a full sharing in the Eucharist.

The close relationship between resurrection and hope of *parousia*, which occurs in the Eucharist was emphasized by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who almost forty years ago in his lectures in eschatology wrote: „The Lord came as already resurrected, he still comes in the Eucharist, and just through it he remains the Coming One, hope of the world”<sup>43</sup> Drawing conclusions from his reason-

<sup>42</sup> L. Balter, *Wierzę w ciała zmartwychwstanie*, Communio 11, 1(1991), p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Śmierć i życie wieczne*, Warszawa 2000, p. 17.

ing, the current Pope Benedict XVI adds that the „eschatological hope combines with the spiritual tension of prayer and power of the community faith, and involves the experienced presence of the Ultimate during the celebration of the Eucharist”<sup>44</sup> which – following the English theologian C. H. Dodd – Pope Benedict XVI describes as a „sacrament of realized eschatology”<sup>45</sup>

However, this does not change the fact that celebrating the Eucharist in its earthly or worldly form will have its end in time. When the day of Christ’s second coming in glory arrives (let us recall that the first Christians were convinced it would happen during the Eucharistic celebration of the Passover), it will terminate the sacramental actualizations of salvific acts, because there will be no need for them. All the saved will participate in heavenly liturgy, in the eternal Eucharist, without a beginning or end, beyond time and space. Therefore, the Eucharist, as partial “coming” of Jesus, will ultimately be completed in the Parousia, that is in his coming in glory, when „we will see him as he is” (1J 3,2)<sup>46</sup>. It means that the Eucharistic celebration of the paschal mystery can rightly be taken as a „little parousia”, namely a specific coming of Christ in the Holy Spirit, anticipating the second coming, last judgment, and life of the future world.

Expecting the ultimate realization of the apocalyptic promise of the Lord, „Surely I am coming soon”, understood as a wholehearted response of God to the imploring *Marana tha* sung at liturgical thanksgivings since apostolic times, it is worth paying attention to the role of the Eucharist as a celebration of the paschal mystery in a positive perception of the future of the world<sup>47</sup> that has been presented as flawed since the beginning of the second millennium of Christianity. Due to such a negative vision of the world, over the course of time the last request of *Our Father* has come to the fore, so that not the cry „Thy kingdom come” moved hearts of the praying people, but the begging „Deliver us from evil” According to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, invocations of the *Litany of the*

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., s. 59.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. J. E. Jezierska, *Eucharystia – udział w śmierci i zmartwychwstaniu Chrystusa*, in: *Eucharystia*, ed. J. Krucina, Wrocław 1987, pp. 159-178.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. W. Pikor, *Czego oczekiwał pierwotny Kościół?*, *Verbum Vitae* 6(2004), pp. 257-263.



*Saints* has undergone a similar development. There, ten invocations clearly showed that „the word evil comprised all human fears and requests dictated by them. The central place is taken by death as the last enemy of man, as the enemy hiding in the shadow of all other enemies”<sup>48</sup>.

The *Litany of the Saints* recited during the liturgies at the Vatican after the death of Pope John Paul II had totally different overtones. It reflected the statement of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger that „in order to find happiness, one does not have to escape from the world but to change it. Old eschatology labeled salvation of the soul is pushed aside, because it does not seem to bring anything to the *praxis* of our times”<sup>49</sup>

Both from the sermon by the dean of the College of Cardinals, Joseph Ratzinger, during the funeral Mass of John Paul II and from the inaugural homily of the newly chosen Pope, Benedict XVI, one can conclude that the *Litany of the Saints*, recited several times at that time, meant the entering of the living Church, led by the Pope who had left to the Father’s house, into „the school of the saints who are great interpreters of true Eucharistic piety”<sup>50</sup>, among whom Blessed Virgin Mary occupies the prime position. She shows most fully the “transforming power present in the Eucharist. In her we see the world renewed in love. Contemplating her, assumed body and soul into heaven, we see opening up before us those «new heavens» and that «new earth» which will appear at the second coming of Christ. Here below, the Eucharist represents their pledge, and in a certain way, their anticipation: «*Veni, Domine Iesu!* (Rev 22:20)»<sup>51</sup>

The importance that the Holy See attached to the above words is visible in the fact that this very thought of John Paul II accompanied the session of the XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which gathered in the Vatican in the Marian month of October, at the end of the *Year of the Eucharist*. It is confirmed by the last words of the document *Instrumentum laboris*, which refer

<sup>48</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Śmierć i życie...*, p. 19.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> EEuch 62; J. Ratzinger, *Bóg jest blisko nas: Eucharystia – centrum życia*, Kraków 2002.

<sup>51</sup> EEuch 62.

to the words of *Mane nobiscum Domine*, Apostolic Letter of the blessed John Paul II, issued on the *Year of the Eucharist*: „May we be helped above all by the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose whole life incarnated the meaning of the Eucharist. «The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery» (EEch 53). The Eucharistic Bread which we receive is the spotless flesh of her Son: *Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine*. In this Year of grace, sustained by Mary, may the Church discover new enthusiasm for her mission and come to acknowledge ever more fully that the Eucharist is the source and summit of her entire life”<sup>52</sup>.

### Streszczenie:

Treść artykułu prezentuje Eucharystię jako celebrowanie misterium paschalnego, dzięki której lud Boży włącza się w dzieje zbawienia: od wcielenia przez mękę, śmierć i zmartwychwstanie aż po zesłanie Ducha Świętego i paruzję, czyli powtórne przyjście Chrystusa w chwale. Konkretnie rzecz biorąc przeprowadzone wywody ukazują najpierw paschalny wymiar ustanowienia Eucharystii, następnie zapoznają z eucharystyczną celebracją Paschy w mocy Ducha Świętego oraz uwypuklają personalną obecność Chrystusa jako naszej Paschy podczas powtarzania Wieczerzy Pańskiej, w końcu zaś przedstawiają Eucharystię jako liturgię niebiańską, wskazując na Maryję, zwaną przez błogosławionego Jana Pawła II „Niewiastą Eucharystii”, w której Kościół kontempluje nie tylko swój najdoskonalszy wzór celebrowania Eucharystii jako misterium paschalnego, ale również antycypowane urzeczywistnienie nowego nieba i nowej ziemi, których człowiek i cała wspólnota ludzka z tęsknotą oczekuje.

<sup>52</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine*, no. 31.