

Body Broken for the World

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A Hungry and Divided World Craving for the Body Broken

The world in which we live is a very unequal and unjust world. On one side all wealth and resources are heaped up in the hands of a few people. On the other side, the majority of the human population is condemned to an acute poverty and inhuman life conditions. Any one who looks at this appalling state of the world may not but raise question on its right to continue as it is and the possibilities to change it. Hunger and other divisive forces at work in today's world, question the very belief in God and God's action in history to change it. Monika K. Hellwig studies the various meanings of hunger in the world and the relevance of the Eucharist as the bread of life.¹ In this article I propose to study how the Eucharist is the body broken for the world.²

Life Offered is Life Shared

Scholars of any intellectual discipline are concerned about life. So are we. As theologians, we are supposed to be all the more concerned about life, as we try to articulate the mystery of God who

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1. Monika K. Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World*, New York: Paulist Press/Deus Book, 1976.
 2. In the familiar theological language, our study would be framed as "The sacrificial character of the Eucharist and its relevance for the world today." But this study is intended to be broader in its outlook. Hence we intend to throw a quick look on the concept of sacrifice also outside Judaism and Christianity.

actually decided to reveal himself after hearing the cry of his people, for their lives were crushed. The God of the Christians is the God of life. Hence when he was asked about his name, he said, "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14). The God who lives is determined to make his people live. But this he does in a paradoxical way. For it is in God emptying himself that humanity becomes rich. It is the divine sacrifice that has become the source of human life on earth and after.

The Notion of Sacrifice in Ancient India

When we read the history of any people, we find that sacrifice has been unquestionably a basic reality in their lives. The Kings of ancient India have offered many *yagas* (sacrifices). These sacrifices were aimed at reducing the anger of God and placing oneself in a suitable position to receive his favours. *Raja yoga* was the sacrifice offered by the kings. It was meant for the welfare of the king and his kingdom. The ordinary people too have offered several sacrifices in smaller scales for the above mentioned reasons: to placate an angry god and to win his favours. The idea of reducing the anger of God is to win his favours. We can see, the reason for the various ancient *yagas* offered by the kings and people was to receive the material benefits including health, wealth and fame.³

The ancient concept of sacrifice is actually much deeper than what is mentioned above. Sacrifice has been the act of man which helps him to put the whole order of the universe in harmony with God. The ancient people of India believed that the world could function only when the *rita* was maintained. It is maintained through the sacrifice. The fact of *yogis* offering sacrifices could be understood in this context. Bede Griffiths in his study of the 'Vedic Revelation' understood the sacrifice to be the basic aspect of human life. As he himself puts it,

the first condition (to offer sacrifice): not seeking a reward, being free from the ego. The next condition is that everything you do

3. The classification of the material and spiritual belongs to the later development of the human history. In fact the material was spiritual in the understanding of the ancient man in India or among the Native Indians of America. All the same, there have been people in ancient India who had devoted themselves to the acquisition of *Gnana*, detached from the riches of this world, looking to become one with the divine.

has to be offered in sacrifice... It is a universal belief that every action of every kind should be offered in sacrifice. I mentioned how eating, drinking, bathing, walking and taking a journey are all sacred actions in Hinduism. Everything has to be offered. Then you act from the spirit of universe, from the cosmic order. Then your action is good and has the right effect... Everything should be offered in sacrifice, and to offer everything in sacrifice, as the Gita says, is to follow the example of God Himself... The whole world is sustained by the action of God. We have to unite our action with the action of God, and then our action has a divine character. Sacrifice is to make a thing sacred, to make it over to God so that it becomes something divine.⁴

Thus the ancient view of sacrifice is far deeper than as commonly understood. Sacrifice is essentially related to the cosmic order and divine life. By offering anything or any act to God, the human being receives back from God the very life abundantly blessed. But the human being should be ready to lose. By losing, one gains and by sacrificing, one wins.

If we closely look at the Indian understanding of life, we will come to know that sacrifice is an essential quality of the reality of life itself. It is not only the demand placed before the human beings, but it is also the very nature of God. The Hindu concept of *purusa* expresses the nature of God as the one who sacrifices.⁵ The *purusa* is identified with the Primordial Man by whose sacrifice the world has come to exist. He is spoken of in many *suktas* of the *upanisads*. He is the one from whom the cosmos comes to exist, by whom the cosmos is sustained, towards whom the cosmos is moving. Finally *purusa* is none other than God himself through whose sacrifice the world / cosmos has come to exist. It is God's self-sacrifice which has become the source of life of humanity and cosmos.

4. Bede Griffiths, *The Cosmic Revelation: The Hindu Way To God*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1985, 96-97.

5. For a systematic and brief study of the concept of *purusa* from the background of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, see Lourdu Anandam, *The Western Lover of the East: A Theological Enquiry into Bede Griffith's Contribution to Christology*, Kodaikanal: La Salette Publications, 1998, 180-203.

The Place of Sacrifice in Judaism

The concept of sacrifice is fundamental to the Semitic religions. After we have seen that in Hindu thought sacrifice has played a vital role, it is not surprising to know that the Semitic religions on the whole are built upon the concept of sacrifice. In agreement with many Bible scholars, we may say that the first historical person known in the Biblical accounts is Abraham.⁶ He is introduced to us by his great readiness to sacrifice his own son.⁷ In the life of the Jews, the concept of sacrifice has played a vital role. As it was the case with any people in the ancient times, the religious history of the Jewish people was their social history. And their religious history was unthinkable without the very many sacrifices which had formed part and parcel of their religio-social life. The history of the Jewish people began with a covenant which was made with a bloody sacrifice and their life as a nation and individuals continued through several sacrifices. The Hebrew gave such an important place for sacrifice in his life because he thought that it was the sacrifice which united him with God.

The book of Leviticus (Chs. 1-5) speaks about five kinds of sacrifices which formed part of the life of the Israelites. They are: 1. Burnt offering, 2. Meal offering, 3. Peace offering, 4. Sin offering and 5. Guilt offering. It is said, the first two offerings were the signs of total belonging of the person to God and the last three sacrifices were expressions of certain aspects of the person's relationship to God. In the second case, it is the restoration of the relationship lost through sin. As in any ancient culture, the Israelite too thought that he makes God sad and ruptures his relationship with God through his sin. It was very essential for him to restore the relationship which was lost through sin. It was quite understandable. But how was it done? Through a sacrifice. In this case either through the Peace offering or Sin offering or Guilt offering. In all these cases the sacrifice (the animal

6. Some would contest the certainty of the total historical character of Abraham. Others would not totally deny his historicity. They prefer to call him a semi-historical personality.

7. In the recent past, people like Eugen Drewermann have contested that 'Abraham's sacrifice narrative' was narrated by the sacred author not mainly to show Abraham's absolute faith in God, but rather in order to tell the people that God wills to stop offering human sacrifices to him. However, our aim here is just to point out that the Judaic history begins with the note of sacrifice.

sacrificed) was either completely or partly burnt. The Hebrews thought that by burning the offering the offerer reached the majesty of God through the very fragrance that went out of the burnt offering.

Besides these common offerings mentioned in the book of Leviticus, three other sacrifices which were offered annually also played an important role in the religious life of the people of Israel.

a. The Passover sacrifice which was made every year on 14th day of the month of Nisan, was to mark the greatest event of the year for the Israelites. The book of Exodus (ch. 12) describes the passover sacrifice elaborately. By offering this Passover sacrifice and by celebrating the feast, the Israelite felt that he was undergoing the very pass-over experience which his ancestors were privileged to go through. It was not merely a memorial, but it became a recurring event again in the psyche of the Jew. As the blood of the Passover lamb saved the first-born of the Israelites, the Passover lamb which was sacrificed every year was seen as a sign of the deliverance and salvation by the hand of God.

b. The sacrifice of the covenant. It was another important sacrifice of the Israelites. Although it was not repeated like the Passover sacrifice, it left behind a profound impression in the hearts of the Israelites. In the history of the Israelites, it was Moses who formed them into one people. It was the sacrifice of the covenant that made them one people and the people of *Yahweh*. Here the importance of blood is realized. The Jewish people are the people of the covenant. And this covenant is made through the sprinkling of blood. Blood indicates the unitive character of the partners entering into the covenant. Blood is also the sign of life. The people entered into a covenant of life with *Yahweh* through blood. The sacrifice is a living reminder of the covenant life. But it was also a warning that if the covenant was broken, the people who broke the covenant would have to shed blood the same way as the victim offered in the sacrifice.

c. The *Yom Kippur*. It is the sacrifice offered on the day of the atonement. The book of Leviticus (ch. 16) gives a detailed description of the rites to be performed on the day of atonement. The day of atonement was chosen by the people of Israel to make offerings and prayers to God for the forgiveness of their sins. This sacrifice was reserved to the High Priest. With all solemnity, the High Priest used to sprinkle the blood of the lamb sacrificed for the atonement of the sins of the Jewish people. It was believed that the blood of the lamb sacrificed on the day of atonement removed the sins of the people.

The High Priest as the representative of the people pleaded before God for the forgiveness of sins. The author of the letter to the Hebrews draws a parallel between the sacrifice offered on the day of Atonement and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered on mount Calvary (cf. Heb 10:1 - 18).

Thus the many sacrifices offered by the Jewish community form the background to understand the meaning of the sacrifice of Calvary.

Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary

The death of Christ which is a great mystery of faith for the believers and a great fascination of history for non-believers is the self-sacrifice of Christ. The very early biblical accounts have viewed the death of Christ beyond any doubt as a 'sacrifice'. The apostolic community began its proclamation from its basic understanding of Christ's death as sacrifice. Because it was a sacrifice, it became the means of salvation. The first writer of the New Testament books, St. Paul, proceeds exactly from this premise. For him, "... our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7). He gives the reason for this act of Christ. "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2). Jesus Christ gave himself, so that we might be saved (Tit 2:14).

It can be clearly established that the understanding of Christ's death as sacrifice was not only the understanding of the apostolic or the early Church. Jesus Christ himself had moved towards Golgotha with the clear conviction and pre-knowledge that he was going to offer his life "for the sake of others" or in other words, for the salvation of humanity. In the theological discussion today questions are raised as to what extent Christ himself would have approved the Christological titles attributed to Jesus. Almost all the theologians accept that Jesus had identified himself with the image of the "suffering servant of Yahweh" which could be translated into New Testament terminology as the "son of man". To deny the voluntary character of Jesus' death is to deny the very basis of Christ's mystery. The Synoptic writers report Christ's predictions of his death to indicate the pre-knowledge and the voluntary character of Jesus' death.⁸

8. In the theological discussion today, the voluntary character of Christ's death is accepted by most of the theologians. This is in line with the Scriptural understanding. There is small group of theologians, however, for whom John

Let us take one step further, deeper into the core of his sacrifice. What is the real meaning of the outpouring of blood on Calvary? Is Calvary the plain murder of an innocent man or is it a voluntary self-offering? It would obviously be wrong and exceedingly superficial to view the event of Calvary merely as one more Roman execution, this time instigated by Jewish authorities. Deep down Jesus was not taken by force, he gave himself up by voluntary consent: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. And having said this he breathed his last" (Lk 23:46). Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God" (Heb 9:14); "Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us..." (Tit 2:14). He commends his spirit, he offers himself, he gives himself: three different ways of expressing the same reality, namely, that at the supreme moment of his sacrificial death, Jesus was pouring out his blood freely, and since in his own Jewish culture blood equals life, in voluntarily pouring out his blood, he was surrendering his life to his Father, in an act of obedience to God for the sake of men.⁹

So the death of Christ is an act of self-surrender to the will of God. Immolation, Oblation and Acceptance could be the three theological terms which may portray the sacrificial character of Christ's death. It is an immolation, because Jesus gave himself as a victim; it is oblation, because Christ accepted the cross not out of force but out of free-will.¹⁰ It is acceptance, because God the Father has accepted the immolation of the Son by raising him from death (Rom 4:24-25; 6:4; 1Cor 6:14; 2Cor 4:14). This point of Father's acceptance, namely Christ's resurrection, forms one whole with the mystery of Christ's sacrifice. It should be rightly insisted upon. At times in Catholic theology, death of Christ is so much insisted upon as to create an impression that Christ's death alone saves! Christ's death and

Macquarrie could be named as the representative, who deny the pre-knowledge of Christ's crucifixion and the voluntary character of his death. He simply calls it *vaticinia post eventum*. John Macquarrie, **Jesus in Modern Thought**, London: SCM Press (second edition), 1992, 355.

9. Luis M. Bermejo, **Body Broken and Blood Shed**, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1997, 62-63.

10. "... I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (Jn 10:18)

resurrection belong to one and the same mystery. They are two sides of one and the same reality. As we have shown here, death of Christ is Christ's act of surrendering to the will of the Father and the resurrection is the Father's act of accepting the self-surrender of his son. Salvation for the humanity and the cosmos dawns through this one mystery of death and resurrection.

Is Eucharist A True Sacrifice?

The fact of the Calvary event being the sacrifice of Christ, is not questioned in the context of ecumenical theological discussions. But since the time of the Reformation the sacrificial character of the Eucharist has become an issue in dispute. The Catholic Church has all along insisted upon its belief that the Eucharist was a sacrifice and a true sacrifice. Martin Luther and his followers expressed no doubt about the fact of the death of Christ on Calvary was a sacrifice. The salvific character of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was very much insisted upon by Martin Luther, other Reformers and their followers. They spoke of the objective salvation brought about by the sacrifice on Calvary as valid for all times. Luther argued against the salvific character of the Eucharistic sacrifice quoting Heb 10:10 saying that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". On the whole, for the Reformers, the Eucharist is a memorial meal than the memorial of the sacrifice on Calvary.

To arrive at the solution to the problem raised by non-Catholics, one would do well to go to the history of the Eucharist in the Church and see the development of the eucharistic theology. St. Paul is the first New Testament writer who lays the basis for the eucharistic theology. Paul develops the eucharistic theology (1Cor 10:16-22) in the context of the new Christians in Corinth raising the question of eating the meat offered to the idols (1Cor 10:14-15). He first establishes that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. He seems to acknowledge three kinds of sacrifices (Pagan, Jewish and Christian). In all the three kinds of sacrifices, Paul accepts that the offerer unites himself with the 'idol' or God by means of the immolated victim. Hence Paul proposes that if the Christians want to be united with God by means of a sacrificial victim they must partake of the sacrificial eucharistic victim. Paul argues, "the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?" (1Cor 10:16).

According to Paul the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist is supported by the argument of *tradition*: "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (1Cor 11:23-24). For that matter all other Eucharist texts too insist upon the sacrificial character of the Eucharist from the very words of institution (Mk 14:22-25; Mt 26:26-29, Lk 22:15-29).

Coming down to the post apostolic period, we find a Patristic unanimity on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist among the Latin, as well as Greek Fathers.

As an answer to the objections raised by the Reformers, the council of Trent reaffirmed the teaching of the Church on the Eucharist. The council called Eucharist the unique sacrament of Christ. The Tridentine teaching reaffirmed the Catholic teaching with a special reference to the Eucharist as sacrifice and its propitiatory nature. It may be good to present just the salient points of its teaching on the Eucharist.

1. The Eucharist is a visible sacrifice.
2. The Eucharist makes present the sacrifice of the Cross and serves for all times as memorial thereof.
3. In Eucharist, the salutary power of Calvary is applied for the remission of our sins.
4. The Eucharist is a propitiatory sacrifice because in it Christ is contained and offered.
5. The Eucharist is offered rightly for both the living and the dead.
6. The Eucharist in no way takes us away from Calvary.¹¹

After a thorough study of the apostolic and patristic accounts, I think we are better enlightened to come to a conclusion. On the basis

11. Josef Neuner & Jacques Dupuis (ed.), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Fourth Revised and Enlarged Edition), Bangalore: TPI, 1981, Nos. 1445-1448, 1555-1558.

of the unanimity of the New Testament records and patristic writings, we can rightly conclude that the Eucharist is a sacrifice,¹² but a sacrifice in the sacramental order. It effectively points to the historical sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. Eucharist is the visible sacrament of the sacrifice of Calvary.

When we defined Eucharist as sacrifice, we need to see the reasonableness of the "Protestant" objection. The Reformers took pain to defend the uniqueness and the "once and for all character" of the sacrifice of the Cross. Therefore, they argued that it could not be repeated in that sense. Today in the context of the ecumenical discussions, many theologians try to see the point objectively. The bloody and historical sacrifice does not take place in the literal sense today on our altars. The ancient liturgies also testify to this fact. The Liturgy of St. James of Jerusalem said, "we are about to offer this awesome and unbloody victim for our sins". The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom spoke of "this spiritual and bloodless worship". In that sense we can speak of the one sacrifice being offered on many altars.

Hence we can henceforth dismiss the necessary contradiction of the Catholic and "Protestant" positions. The sacrifice of the Cross is in the historical order and the sacrifice of the Eucharist is in the sacramental order. Both are intimately connected to each other. The eucharistic sacrifice flows from the historical sacrifice of the Cross. The historical sacrifice of the Cross is represented (re-presented)¹³ by the eucharistic sacrifice, because, by so doing, the salvation brought by the Cross of Christ is made available for the people of today. And by doing so we fulfill the command of the Lord. Theologians have used various similes to show the inter-relatedness of both the sacrifices.

12. The whole of the Catholic eucharistic theology can be presented under three heading - The Eucharist as sacrifice, meal and presence. The Eucharist becomes meal and presence on account of its sacrificial character. Because Christ has sacrificed himself, he has become food and presence. As otherwise we would go beyond our scope, we restrict ourselves here to the Eucharist as a sacrifice. A complete treatment on the subject of the Eucharist necessarily includes the Eucharistic dimensions of food and presence.

13. Karl Rahner and Angelus Haussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1968, 22.

Sacrifice of the Cross	-	Sacrifice of the Eucharist
Voice	-	Echo
Spring	-	Stream
Love	-	Response

These are similes which can help us to understand the inter-relatedness of the reality of both the sacrifices.

Body Broken and Blood Shed

In the order of the Mass there are two blessings: blessing over the bread and blessing over the wine. The separation of the body from the blood of Christ has given rise to theological discussions. Some theologians appreciate this separation as expressing the symbolic and subordinate character of the Eucharist.¹⁴ But from the point of view of the official Church, the separation of the two elements or species was explained as a sign of the violent death of Christ.

The eucharistic species under which he is present symbolize the violent separation of his body and blood, and so a commemorative showing forth (i.e., a memorial) of the death which took place in reality on Calvary is repeated in each Mass, because by distinct representations Christ Jesus is signified and shown forth in the state of victim.¹⁵

Another interpretation that is given is that body and blood are complementary realities; when they are united, they indicate life; and when they are separated, they point out death. Well, this is the Greek way of looking at the reality and not the Hebrew way. At the same time, it is beyond question that the biblical authors have presented the episode of the eucharistic institution in the categories of body and blood. The biblical scholarship does not doubt that these are the words of Jesus himself and he pronounced them on the wine after saying them on the bread. What is then conveyed by presenting the event of Christ's offering himself in the form of body and blood separately? "For a Semite, body does not designate a partial element in man that is to be complemented by blood, as if body and blood are two

14. Bermejo, *Body Broken*, 73.

15. Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 23.

complementary realities."¹⁶ Now by and large there is a consensus about it. In the opinion of the scholars, this is nothing but the emphasis laid on the aspect of Jesus' self-gift.¹⁷ Kilmartin says that by way of climatic parallelism, Jesus expresses in a more dramatic form the revelation already made in the words spoken over the bread.

In short, we may comfortably conclude that the repeated words of consecration, have no other special meaning than the emphasis laid by Jesus on the sacrifice he was making. So, the words of the institution, "this is my body given for you" and "this is my blood given for you" indicate clearly the sacrificial death of Jesus.

The Pastoral Implications of the Body Broken

After dwelling sufficiently on the dogmatic aspects of the Eucharist as sacrifice, now we should specify the pastoral implications of the Body broken for the world. For without perceiving the pastoral implications of the Eucharist and executing them, all our deep and lofty thoughts from the dogmatic or systematic theological points of view, will not be of much help. Here it would be good to recall what the great pastoral theologian of our time, Henry J.M. Nouwen, once wrote in his diary.

For the past few weeks we have had a Friday night lecture by a visiting seminary professor. He has been speaking about the doctrine of the Trinity and especially about the Holy Spirit. For me these lectures are a special experience. ... I like the lectures, I am intrigued, I don't want to miss them - but at the same time I feel dissatisfied on a level. I did not understand in the past but is now closer to my consciousness... I kept saying to myself, "How interesting, how insightful" - and at the same time I said to myself, "So what?". What do all these words about God and the Father, the Son, and the Spirit have to do with men here and now? As soon as I step outside the circle of his terminology,

16. Luis M. Bermejo, **Body Broken**, 73.

17. Body and blood as pointing to the sacrificial dimension of Christ's death is the present theological consensus among the scholars in theology. However, we should take note of the theological opinion which was present earlier that the two species denote the meal dimension of the Eucharist, as food and drink are usually needed for a meal.

which is very familiar to me, the whole level of discourse seems extremely alienating.¹⁸

The great Holland born theologian's words should certainly move us forward to translate the lofty dogmatic truths of the Eucharistic mystery into concrete life. I do not personally feel that the theological truths can any time alienate someone. But at the same time the great truths about the divine mystery may not be understandable and appreciable unless it means something to the people who live around us here and now.

Hence, in the first place, the Eucharist is the memorial of the supreme and unique sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus was marked with the sacrificial spirit from birth to death, from Bethlehem to Golgotha. "I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb 10:7) was the inner disposition of Jesus. Even the thought of the terrible death on the Cross did not deviate him from this sacrificial disposition towards God for the salvation of the World. Christ permitted his body to be broken and his blood shed, so that his life might become the source of life for many.

When we celebrate the Eucharist as the memorial of the sacrifice of the Cross, we as Church and individuals are supposed to be marked deeply by the spirit of sacrifice. "The Church presents the bread and wine that they may be blessed; it presents the gifts that they may become signs of brotherly charity; it presents itself that it may be sanctified."¹⁹ This is a strong message to the Church as community and individuals. As we are aware, there are millions of God's children all over the globe crying for bread. We as Church - as community and individuals - cannot continue to celebrate the Eucharist meaningfully without doing something concrete to change the poverty-stricken situation of the world. When we become more and more aware that the salvation brought by Christ is an all embracing reality, we are urgently moved to change the situation which reduces more and more people into nonhumans. Poverty destroys the very personality of a human being. Hence it is part of the Church's mission to sacrifice itself so that the hungry masses may have bread (food) and thus have life.

18. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Genesee Diary*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1976, 149-150.

19. Max Thurian, *The Eucharistic Memorial*, Part II, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968, 77.

In the Eucharistic celebration, we attempt to make ourselves an eternal gift to the Father. In the signs of bread and wine, we offer ourselves. This offering cannot be acceptable to God without an external sacrifice, without the readiness to lose what we have acquired and what we possess. "The external sacrifice represents the true, internal sacrifice according to which the human spirit offers itself up to God."²⁰ Without an external sacrifice, the offering of our eucharistic sacrifice may become just another ritual! The words of Irenaeus sharply drive home this point: "It is not the sacrifice that sanctifies man, but rather man's conscience that sanctifies the sacrifice."²¹

Secondly, the sacramental character of the Eucharist should have an impact on the life of Christians. On the whole, the Christian is called to live out his vocation of being the "visible sign of the invisible grace of God". Trusting totally in God and living out this faith is the way of becoming the visible sign of the invisible grace of God. This was the life of the early Christians. They "would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as had any need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:45-47). Bede Griffiths spoke of the Eucharistic action thus:

In the Eucharist God is worshipped. You offer what you are doing to God. At the same time it is God Himself who makes the offering and who is being offered. God is both priest and victim. And it is offered in the fire of God: the action itself is a sacrifice and the fire of God's love in which the sacrifice is offered. So every action should be a eucharistic action, that is the goal, to be united with Christ in His offering, so that one's total life is offered to God.²²

The eucharistic action, then, is nothing but the life influenced by the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is a life in which the individual

20. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, 3, 120.

21. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 18, 3.

22. Griffiths, *Cosmic Revelation*, 99.

Christian feels sacrificed with Christ and as Paul he is able to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me".

In this context, some concrete suggestions could be made. The Jubilee year might become a time offered by the Lord to fulfill the demands of the eucharistic sacrifice. It is all the more fitting, as it is declared also as the 'Year of the Eucharist'.

1. Our Parish units have been divided into several small Christian communities. In all these communities there are both rich and poor families. Some families can afford to maintain several families. If these families could be motivated to share a little of what they have, the eucharistic community will be formed in those localities. Christ offered himself, so that he might become food for the world. Should not the Eucharist be lived in this way!

2. The pious associations and youth groups etc. are units with a lot of potentials. Most of the times, these groups are closed in upon themselves. They do not look beyond and out. They do not become aware of the needs of other people. They can be motivated to adopt less privileged groups than they, like children and old people.

3. One of the benefits of the Jubilee year in the Old Testament was freedom for slaves, cancellation of debts and loans. There are people even among Christians who make a lot of money by lending money for a disproportionate interest. These people may be invited to condone the debts fully or partially. To start with, the debts of the servants working in our Christian institutions may be completely condoned.

Finally, a life totally lived and offered should be the result of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The supreme sacrifice of Christ on the Cross reconciled the cosmos and humanity with the Father, removed the division caused by sin and offered a new life to humanity. It is continued by the Eucharistic sacrifices offered daily all over the world. This Eucharistic sacrifice invites each Christian to live a life worthy of it. A self-gift which pre-supposes immolation of the self to defend, save and protect the life of other people, especially the defenseless, like that of Archbishop Oscar Romero, Sr. Rani Mary and Fr. Arul Doss could be the right outcome of the Eucharistic sacrifice we offer daily.