

Reflections on the Eucharist:

A Eucharistic Theology
of Christ's Mind/Body



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INTRODUCTION

The following paper provides a three-tiered analysis of the Church's central ritualistic act of worship, namely the Eucharist(s).¹ The paper begins with a discussion of the context in which our analysis will take place and a functional definition of ritual. Proceeding from the contextual and definitional elaboration, we will take up the three-tiers of analysis, beginning with the somatic level followed by the narrative level and concluding with the theological level. After concluding the three-tier analysis of the Eucharist, I provide an initial proposal concerning the practical implications of the study with regards to our understanding of the Church as a site of the recapitulation of memory and a challenge to violence in the world. Utilizing the multiple disciplines of theology, neuroscience, narrative theory, ritual studies, the paper argues for a eucharistic theology of Christ's mind/body that situates the *ekklesia* in a reciprocal, co-constitutive relationship at the center of the Eucharistic celebration.

¹ My use of "Eucharist(s)" follows Robert Daly who states, "I have consciously used the plural, Eucharists, not to undercut the affirmation of the Eucharist as the sacrament of unity (at least in hope), but simply to point out that Christians have significantly different ways of celebrating Eucharist, as the recent Roman Catholic recognition of the Chaldean Anaphora of Addai and Mari reminds us." Robert Daly. "Eucharistic Origins: From the New Testament to the Liturgies of the Golden Age" in *Sacrifice, Scripture, and Substitution: Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity*. (ed. by Ann Astell and Sandor Goodhart. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 168-69; Ruth Duck provides further explanation of the diversity of terminology and expression when she writes, "The celebration of the Lord's meal has been celebrated in a variety of ways throughout the centuries, known to the Methodists and others as Holy Communion, Reformed Christians as the Lord's Supper, Orthodox Christians as the Divine Liturgy, Anglicans as Eucharist, and Roman Catholics as Eucharist or Mass (from the final words in Latin, *missa est*)." Ruth C. Duck. *Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21st Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 184.

SCOPE, CONTEXT, AND RITUAL

The central ritual of the Christian Church is the Eucharist, the memorial meal of Christ's body and blood. The ritual emerges out of the Church's act of remembering in response to a specific command. As described in Paul's Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor. 11:23-25) and the Gospel accounts (Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:18-20), the command of Christ is summarized: "This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. This is my blood poured out for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Flora Keshgegian remarks that in the ritual practice of the Eucharist, "[r]emembering is communicated and sustained through 'habitual performances.' It is through ritual practice that the Church passes on tradition and makes it live in the present."²

Keshgegian's remarks highlight essential aspects of rituals, especially in the context of the Christian Church. As a functional, working definition moving forward, rituals are: (1) prescribed acts, (2) habitual performances, (3) call attention to an event as notable and remarkable, (4) provide an ordering to human lives, both individually and communally, (5) can mark critical transitions in and throughout life, and (5) are symbolic public events with a surplus of potential meaning.³ The Eucharist is celebrated in variety of ways in many contexts and historical settings throughout history. Rather than situate our analysis within a particular tradition of the Church, we will investigate some common elements found throughout the global Church.

² Flora A. Keshgegian. *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 218.

³ The functional, working definition is taken from Onno van der Hart and David Hogue in *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past*. David Hogue. *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past: Story, Ritual, and the Human Brain*. (Pilgrim Press: Cleveland, 2003), 122-23.

Specifically, the analysis focuses on the four central actions of the presider as elaborated by Gregory Dix (taking, giving thanks, breaking, and giving with giving of thanks), the words of institution, and some typical embodied actions and movements of participants.⁴

SOCIO-SOMATIC ANALYSIS

Contemporary social neuroscience demonstrates that human beings are social animals with social brains. From neonate imitation and infant attachment to the complex neurological, physiological, and psychological elements involved in a simple conversation between persons, science continues to unearth evidence that human beings are social through and through. Taking social neuroscientific discoveries and applying them to an analysis of the eucharist yields a surplus of results beyond the confines of this paper. For our purposes, we will analyze (1) the social attunement and resonance that occurs during the eucharist, (2) the activation and function of the mirror neuron system as it relates to the observation and simulation of the presider's actions, and (3) the physical and material nature of the ritual as it relates to the taking, chewing/drinking, and ingesting the bread and wine.

Social Neuroscience and Somatic Resonance/Attunement

At the socio-somatic level, the Eucharistic evokes a complex social interaction between and within bodies as people participate in the ritual performance. Rituals act as synchronizing events where movements, whether choreographed or not, act to link participants in profound ways. As participants engage in the ritual, their bodies attune to and resonate with one another.

⁴ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*. (Rev. 3rd ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 233-34.

As a result of this social-physiological attunement, a variety of physiologically processes begin to line up, such as heart rate, breathing, and affect. Similar to an emotional contagion sweeping through a crowd at a football game, those engaged in the enactment of the eucharistic ritual begin to resonate with those around them, which serves to “communicate information, advance social cohesion, and enhance group safety.”⁵

The manner through which social cohesion, resonance, and attunement take place is the mirror neuron systems in concert with resonance behaviors. Resonance behaviors, the reflexive imitation responses that humans make when interacting with others, are the result of the “connection of imitation with visceral and emotional circuitry” that “now allow the same systems to support emotional resonance, attunement, and empathy.”⁶ As humans interact with one another in a social context such as ritualistic performance, they “demonstrate what is called the *chameleon effect*, which is taking on of the motor behaviors, gestures, and timing of those around [them].”⁷ What emerges from the social attunement of bodies that results from the mirror neuron systems and resonance behaviors is a social group mind coordinated by the individual social brains, linked together through multiple channels of rapid, automatic, and unconscious communication across social synapses.⁸ The resultant unified social group mind serves the ritual process by syncing participants to one another and is beneficial for deepening bonding and loyalty to the group by way of shared socio-somatic belonging and identity.

⁵ Louis Cozolino. *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*. (2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2014), 226.

⁶ Cozolino. *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 226-28.

Somatic Knowing

A further dimension of the socio-somatic level opened up by ritual performance, and the somatic resonance of bodies is the transference of information at the physical level. The knowledge presented at the somatic-social level is the socio-affective-physiological information received by a person's body in relation to the environment, other bodies, and one's own body.⁹ As William D. Roozeboom writes, "...to truly understand the experience of embodied human beings, our understandings of what 'experience' entails must include physiology, body maps, interoceptions and proprioception, and movement/physical activity, as they are vital sources of wisdom for identity and relationality."¹⁰ Roozeboom highlights the need to locate our understanding of experience and further our understanding of knowledge within an understanding of human beings as whole, intra/inter-relational, dynamic, plastic, and performative agents. As human beings, people experience and interface with other bodies and environmental stimuli at a level prior to linguistic description.

The somatic nature of participating in the Eucharist opens up a limitless horizon of knowledge which precedes one's discursive interpretation or meaning-making. As contemporary brain sciences have demonstrated, our ability to know something is not strictly a cognitive feature limited to the brain. The mind, as first and foremost, a monitor of the body, knows in relation to bodily stimuli coming from the environment coupled with the body's location with respect to other bodies.¹¹ Somatic knowledge precedes and informs cognitive knowledge and

⁹ Antonio Damasio. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotions in the Making of Consciousness*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1999), 146-47.

¹⁰ William D. Roozeboom. *Neuroplasticity, Performativity, and Clergy Wellness: Neighbor Love as Self-Care*. (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017), 2-3.

¹¹ Hogue, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past*, 10.

often exceeds the ability of the mind to encase all of the somatic signals received by the body in linguistic or symbolic terms.

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone offers a helpful distinction by which we can differentiate between a somatic level of knowledge and a linguistic level of knowledge. Sheets-Johnstone distinguishes between *having a body*—experiencing the body as an object in motion, in effect, *perceiving* the body—and *being a body*—feeling the flow of its qualitative dynamics in moving.¹² Sheets-Johnstone proposes that *being a body* precedes and gives birth to the symbolic-linguistic realm—*having a body*—whereby a person perceives their body as an object in motion. *The tactile-kinesthetic-affective body*, what Sheets-Johnstone's also calls *being a body*, and its inherent qualitative dynamic realities provides a pastoral means of describing people's participation in the Eucharist more inclusively. By moving away from a logocentric understanding and priority of understanding of the Eucharist, people who experience the world and the ritual primarily through their tactile-kinesthetic-affective bodies are included into the ritual process at the foundational level of somatic knowing and understanding that exceeds all logocentric attempts at confining the ritual to linguistic and neuro-typical privileges.

The second aspect of the socio-somatic analysis is the four-fold action of the presider. The actions of the presider—taking bread and cup, breaking the bread, and giving the bread and cup—function as both a singular and collective performance. Through socio-somatic resonance afforded by the mirror neurons system, a simulation of the presider is established in the minds of the participants as they observe the presider. Mirror neurons are “found in association areas of the frontal and parietal cortices” and “lie at the crossroads of inner and outer experience, where

¹² Maxine Sheets-Johnstone. “Why Kinesthesia, Tactility and Affectivity Matter: Critical and Constructive Perspectives” in *Body and Society* Vol. 24 (4) 2018, 22

multiple networks of visual, motor, and emotional processing converge.”¹³ At the convergence point, mirror neurons function to bridge observation and action and further make it possible for participants in the Eucharist to find themselves acting through the presider as-if they were performing the acts themselves.¹⁴

Eat and Drink, Bread and Wine

The last socio-somatic element to analyze is the chewing and ingestion of the sacramental elements. Strictly at the level of bodies, the consumption of the bread and wine acts as a ritual reminder that in the assembly of those gathered, nourishment of self and others is central to the ritual act. The act is both personal in one’s consumption of the elements and communal in the group’s consumption of the elements along with the continued activation of the mirror system that reproduces the action in one’s mental state.

Alongside the physical nourishment of the body, the other senses of the body activate in response to taking and ingesting the sacramental elements. As James Brenneman notes concerning the sensory-somatic nature of the Eucharist, “During the Last Supper as described by Luke, when Jesus uses the phrase ‘Do this in *remembrance* of me,’ the Greek word he uses for remembrance (*anamnesis*) is the same word that we associate with ‘mnemonic device.’ By using the bread and wine, Jesus was using mnemonic devices to get us to experience the meaning of his death through all our senses: taste, touch, hearing, smell, sight.”¹⁵ Brenneman demonstrates the incorporation and importance of human sensory experience as it relates to the ritual of the

¹³ Cozolino. *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, 206.

¹⁴ Hogue, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past*, 151.

¹⁵ James E. “Turning Tables: War, Peace, and the Last Supper” in *Compassionate Eschatology: The Future as Friend*. (eds. Ted Grismud and Michael Hardin. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 111.

Eucharist. The body's senses provide a source of information and experience for the body that has, in itself, a surplus of meaning beyond an interpretive system of meaning. Thus, the socio-somatic level of analysis above demonstrates the wealth of information afforded to the social body in relation to other social bodies in the ritual act and grounds the ritual in an excess of meaning that cannot be discursively confined.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The Words of Institution

The words of institution locate the Eucharist within the overlapping worlds of memory, story, and imagination. As Brenneman notes above, the Last Supper institutes a command by Christ to “do this in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of me.” The story of Christ's meal with his disciples before his subsequent crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension is remembered by the Christian church each time they participate in the Eucharist. The Eucharist functions as the central act within the broader corporate activity of worship, which is fundamentally social in structure and within which people are embedded into a particular kind of society grounded in the remembrance of a particular story. Here, remembering and narrative are woven together in constructive ways which are highlighted by Flora Keshgegian's four purposes of remembering:

1. First of all, remembering confers identity, both personal and corporate, and so makes us human and constitutes us as community.
2. Second, remembering provides meaning and structure and so informs faith and action. Who we are and the way we are are constituted through what we do. Remembering is fundamentally a practice that produces narratives of meaning.
3. Third, remembering orders time from past to future through the present. Remembering is a historical activity that sets us in time.

4. Fourth, remembering makes possible liberation and transformation and so it mediates salvation. Remembering is for the sake of re-membering.¹⁶

Narratively and neurologically, the words of institution function to re-enact past events in the present. The text brings to light the dynamic way memory and narrative work in tandem to render what was relegated to the past to the present. The words of institution locate the ritual within a shared communal story, on the one hand, and brings to the participants' minds the event as a simulation re-enacted in the present, on the other hand. Thus, the Eucharist, as it is narrated, functions to re-enact the past in the present in a virtual reality constructed within the minds of the participants. The imagination is the time machine through which participants are able to live, for a time, as though the world they imagine is present and 'real' and as though their bodies were there.¹⁷ Ritual, narrative, and social-somatic resonance all bring about a liminal experience where participants encounter another world through the embodied practice of the Eucharist.¹⁸

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

At the theological level of analysis, the eucharist evokes a rich history and tradition of reflection and explanation. Notably, the eucharist, as a ritual, refuses to be symbolically exhausted of meaning and ought to continue to be expounded upon as no single interpretation will render the meaning universal and complete. As James F. White states, "Indeed, to reduce

¹⁶ Keshgegian. *Redeeming Memories*, 201-202.

¹⁷ David A. Hogue *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past*, 151

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

what Christians experience to a single interpretation would be to miss much of the eucharist's power, although such reductionism has often been too tempting to resist."¹⁹

The singularity-in-time of the interpreter conditions interpretations of the Eucharist, historical interpretations do coincide with the contemporary descriptions above, namely interpretations that take into account participants as tactile-kinesthetic-affective bodies and ritual as a social-somatic event that brings about a resonance of bodies in relation to other bodies and environment. The theological interpretation that follows focuses on the role of memory and remembering within the Eucharist as a co-constituting act whereby the Church remembers Christ through the Eucharist and reciprocally Christ re-members the Church as his Body in and through the Church's remembrance.

Anamnesis

Flora Keshgegian captures the co-constitutive act of remembering when she writes, "The *anamnesis* of the liturgy not only recalls the words and actions of Jesus Christ but makes them present, in and through the body of Christ gathered and shared. Remembering Christ re-members the community. And reciprocally, the community makes remembrance possible. In other words, re-remembering also leads to remembering."²⁰ Keshgegian captures how the Church's remembrance of Christ re-presents Christ in the present Eucharistic event through his Body, namely the *ekklesia*, the gathered ones who are re-membered. As Nonna Verna Harrison puts it, "anamnesis is an encounter in the present with the Lord who transfigures and transcends history, and thus it is also a proleptic anticipation of the age to come."²¹ Harrison captures a second

¹⁹ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 249.

²⁰ Keshgegian. *Redeeming Memories*, 224.

dimension at work in the Eucharistic remembrance beyond the re-membering of Christ and his Body, namely the transcendence of time, space, and history that occurs during the festal celebration. The transcendence of time that is described by Harrison and Keshgegian coincides with the deafferentation—the decreased sense of self in a particular time and place—that occurs during ritualistic processes and the coinciding decrease of input into the left posterior parietal lobe whereby the boundaries between self and others are blurred which opens up the experience of living, for a time, as though the virtual reality we imagine is real and present.²²

A further explanation of the transcendence of time and reality that takes place during the celebration of the Eucharist is found in apocalyptic terms. Fr. John Behr succinctly describes the apocalyptic nature of the Eucharist and is worth quoting in full:

It is, I would suggest, an apocalyptic vision created by the intersection of eternity and time, with the former opened up to us in and through the Passion of Christ, while we yet remain in the latter. We are, simultaneously, in both; and we are brought into close approximation with our true being, now ‘hidden with Christ in God,’ in the earthly liturgy, which is an image of the heavenly liturgy. Our end, in Christ, is to be a participant in the heavenly court, celebrating the heavenly liturgy in the eternity of God; and although this will only be a ‘present reality,’ as it were, for us after our sojourn (and being fashioned) upon earth, yet as an eternal reality, we are always already there, and have always been so.²³

Behr’s description of the apocalyptic space opened up by the Eucharist nicely captures the way time in rituals is suspended as people enter into a transcended sense of time out of time. David Hogue offers an explanation which functions in our case to connect the apocalyptic understanding to the social neuroscientific understanding of the Eucharist when he writes, “The eucharist embodies the story of Christ’s presence among communities of faith. Since our brains innately ritualize life experiences, we discover that rituals provide a time and place where the norms of everyday living are temporarily suspended—a liminal space. Under these unique

²¹ Gregory of Nazianzus. *Festal Orations*. (trans. Nonna Verna Harrison. Popular Patristics Series 36. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 24-25.

²² Hogue, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past*, 149-151.

²³ Origen. *On First Principles*. (trans. John Behr. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), lxxxviii.

circumstances we temporarily enter a world remarkably different from the one we regularly inhabit.”²⁴ The liminal space afforded to the participants in the Eucharist functions to re-enact the past event and narrative of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension in the present while simultaneously establishing the anticipated eschatological future reality in the same present. The Eucharist is the ritual event whereby the alpha and omega points of history and time meet in the co-constitutive re-membering of Christ and his Body, the Church.

To take the co-constitutive act further, one might take Paul’s description in the Corinthian correspondence where he writes, “Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many... You are the body of Christ and parts of each other” as an analogy alongside insights from social neuroscience to understand a little deeper what is taking place in the ritual (1 Cor. 12:12, 27 CEB). Paul writes in the epistle to Colossae, “He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18 CEB). Christ, as the head of the body, would, from our social neuroscience perspective, house the brain of the body. “The brain,” as Hogue states, “is first and foremost a monitor of the body.”²⁵ As the brain monitors the body, the body sends sensory-somatic signals to the brain that surpass the mind’s conscious ability to reveal.²⁶

The Eucharist is a co-constitutive act of remembrance where the Church remembers Christ and doing so re-members his Body. Christ’s Body, re-membered in the Eternal Present, is constituted by the present participants alongside the communion of the saints re-presented and re-membered. As the Body of Christ re-membered, the singularity of the members does not fall

²⁴ Hogue, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past*, 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁶ Damasio. *The Feeling of What Happens*, 47.

prey to uniformity without difference. Instead, social neuroscience offers a helpful way of understanding the difference between the Body of Christ and Christ's particularity and uniqueness. "Each time the brain recalls a memory, it reconstructs the story from image fragments stored throughout the brain."²⁷ The reconstruction of memory from image fragments each time memory gets recalled gets at the initial level of explanation. The particular celebration of the Eucharist in time correlates to the act of recalling a memory. In that instance of recollection, Christ re-members the Church from the image fragments that are present, the members gathered at that moment in time. At the second level of explanation, Christ, as the Head of the Body, cannot take in the surplus of bodily information from each of its members. Here, the Body, made up of countless members, retains its difference from Christ in the excess of bodily information, namely the varied multiplicity of histories, stories, experiences of each person. The difference protects against a pure identification of Christ and the Church or the Head and the Body.

Furthermore, the analogy goes further when one takes into account a whole-body perspective, which posits that there is no brain without the body and vice versa. Thus, Christ, present in the Eucharist, is the foundational hope and assurance that at the consummation God will be all in all, and all will be re-membered so as to re-member Christ's Body. As Nonna Verna Harrison summarizes, "In festal celebration the boundaries of sequential time are transcended as the original saving events and the present experience of the congregation join together. The past events of Christ's incarnate life and the Spirit's descent, the present experience of the Christian community, and the future participation in God's kingdom are made one."²⁸

²⁷ Hogue, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past*, 158.

²⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus. *Festal Orations*, 26.

PRAXIS

To conclude, we will now take the information from the three-tiered analysis and translate it into the context of the life of the Church and its members. The somatic-social, narrative, and theological analyses offer ways of understanding the Eucharist as a ritual, story, and eschatological mystery that can aid our understanding of the Church as a site of the recapitulation of memory and the challenge to violence in the world and among persons. The next section takes up the two aspects of the Church aided by our prior analyses.

The Recapitulation of Memory and End of Violence

Memory and the self-in-relation: Narrative theory illustrates the relationship between memory and the formation of the self. Narrative theory in concert with social neuroscience posits that the self emerges from the collaboration of memories strung together in narrative coherence. As a person develops, experiences and interactions with others coalesce into stored memories that are recalled and narrated in a story framework. Thus, memory is the key to having a self. As Brown and Strawn's make clear, "remembering confers identity, both personal and corporate...remembering provides meaning and structure...who we are and the way we are are constituted through what we do...remembering is fundamentally a practice that produces narratives of meaning."²⁹ Memory functions as the means through which a self understands itself as a self-in-relation-to the remembered and re-constructed narrative of meaning.

²⁹ Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn. *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 2012), 143-46.

In the Church's Eucharistic practice, the act of remembrance takes center stage. In remembering Christ, the Church is re-membered as Christ's body. As the Body of Christ, the Church is composed of many members with unique experiences of suffering, pain, joy, love, and loss. In the Eucharist, our personal stories are incorporated into God's story via the Body of Christ. The Eucharist brings to mind the story of Christ's death and resurrection. Christ's death and resurrection are the occasion where innocence suffers death and is vindicated in the resurrection by God. "Through the resurrection God takes the side of the poor and their perspective becomes one with his, pronouncing that 'there *is* an end to the perspective of the oppressor. There is a future and a voice for the voiceless'."³⁰

Christ's Passion—the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit—functions as both an act of solidarity in suffering and death and an act of holistic healing. On the one hand, the cross is the culmination of the whole Body's historical suffering—the members of the Church, their stories, histories, and life-experiences—and on the other hand, the cross is God's eternal memory that gives back to the suffering Body its memory made whole through the process of witness. Here in the words of Rowan Williams, "'my memory becomes *my* memory, the memory of a self with a story of responsibility. And to remember in this way is to have restored to me part of the self that I have diminished'."³¹ In this way, "Memory is grounded in a God who saves, who gives us back our past: a God to whom all things are present."³²

³⁰ Julie Gittoes. *Anamnesis and the Eucharist: Contemporary Anglican Approach*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 108.

³¹ Gittoes. *Anamnesis*, 110.

³² *Ibid.*

The concept of God's 'memory' as holding or keeping open the past, in the Eucharist, overthrows the delusion that our violence is final and irremediable. Here, Julie Gittoes writes, "God receives the victim's pain into an infinite selfhood and self-presence; and so...guarantees the hope of healing because its resources and possibilities cannot be exhausted or extinguished by the world's destructiveness."³³ God—the presence to which all reality is present—gives us back our memories in a particular kind of context, namely the presence of Jesus. The past of hurt and vulnerability is not returned to people unchanged; rather, the resurrection of Christ returns people's memories in the form of incarnational witness.

Christ's death on the cross is the site where God witnesses in God's own flesh the entirety of human suffering and death. The suffering of humanity is not brushed aside but eternally scars the body/Body of Christ. The suffering of humanity is given narrative and given a self-beyond-the-suffering in Christ's eschatological Body. The Body of Christ, healed through the witness of Christ's suffering and forgiveness on the cross, is given its mission through the Eucharist. The Church is the Body of Christ made present in the midst of the world as a witness to the suffering-whole-making love of God in Christ and Christ's judgement on the relationally distorting-violent-acts in the world. As Julie Gittoes in concert with Rowan Williams conclusively put things:

For the Church to fulfil its critical role in the world, judgement and criticism has to be built into its own life and structures: 'only a penitent Church can manifest forgiven-ness'. Forgiveness does not occur without relationship and transformation. Williams describes it as an 'irritant' that stimulates protest at flawed and damaging social and personal relationships, and the means of providing us with a sense of what it is to relate to God and each other: 'once we grasp that forgiveness occurs not by a word of acquittal but by a transformation of the world of persons, we are not likely to regard it as something which merely refers backwards'. The Church is called to take risks: to risk unpopularity, to risk being on the margins, to risk causing offence, and to risk vulnerability. The practice of anamnesis in the Eucharist is central to the dynamic of enabling the fullness of the embodied Church to engage in this task.³⁴

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 113.

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