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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie**

Band (Jahr): **103 (2013)**

Heft 1-2

PDF erstellt am: **10.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-405115>

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Old Catholic Eucharistic Prayers in Ecumenical Context: Some Current Questions

David R. Holeton

1. Introduction

The year 2013 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Sacro-sanctum Concilium* (Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council is not far off (2015) and it is now over forty years since the promulgation of the Missal of Paul VI (1968). While there are some who appear to be observing these anniversaries as moments to re-think (and undo) the accomplishments of these events so that the "reform of the reform" has become entirely retrograde in its aims, I will argue that now is the moment to evaluate the liturgical reforms of the past decades and then to push forward so that the insights gained from the years of pastoral use of the new texts can lead us further towards a genuine renewal of liturgical life in the Old Catholic churches. The reflections which follow are an attempt to view contemporary Old Catholic texts from the perspective of questions that are being widely asked in the oecumene.

While the liturgical reforms that issued from Vatican II had a catalytic effect on virtually all western liturgical churches, they had an incontestable influence on the liturgies of most of the churches belonging to the Union of Utrecht. Some of the churches of the Union had, since their inception, continued to use the Roman Missal with few variations; others had made greater adaptations. In one way or another, however, their eucharistic liturgies, like their other rites, were clearly the direct progeny of the Roman liturgical books promulgated after the Council of Trent – notably the *Missale Romanum* of Pius V (1570) and the *Pontificale Romanum* of Clement VIII.¹ This was particularly true of the place accorded to the Roman Canon (*Canon missae*) which continued to be used in many Old Catholic churches, often with only minor variations or "corrections" thought necessary to comply with some of the fundamental principles of Old Catholicism. This steadfast adherence to the Roman Canon served as

¹ The *Rituale Romanum* of Paul V (1617), unlike the missal and pontifical, was never universally imposed so that diocesan uses had more influence on the development of Old Catholic *ritual* than did a Roman *editio typica*.

a touch-stone, visibly marking the will of the various Old Catholic churches to remain truly “catholic”. This was entirely unlike Anglicans and Lutherans who continued to use the fundamental “shape” of the western (Roman) rite but who, in the sixteenth century, explicitly rejected any use of the Roman Canon.

The liturgical reforms issuing from Vatican II were not received with equal enthusiasm throughout the Union of Utrecht. For some churches, the promulgation of the new Roman liturgical books served as a catalyst in the growing desire for liturgical renewal within the churches themselves just as it did for the other western churches where the liturgical renewal movement had been growing in influence during the previous decades and had prepared the ground for a major reform of the rites. Others in the Union remained extremely cautious and continued to use the Missal of Pius V, with the appropriate Old Catholic “corrections”, well after the promulgation of the Missal of Paul VI in 1969.

All that, however, is history and, today, each of the churches of the Union of Utrecht has its own liturgical books (at least for the Eucharist²) that have been reformed at least once and, sometimes, several times since the promulgation of the Missal of Paul VI. As in all the liturgical reforms that have marked the western churches, the fundamental shape of the eucharistic *ordo* has been greatly simplified – heavily inspired by the *ressourcement* or movement *ad fontes* which played such an important role not only within the workings of Vatican II but also in the diverse liturgical movements that had exercised an increasing role in the life of the western churches. Thus, today we can speak of an ecumenical consensus on the “shape” of the eucharistic *ordo*, not so much as a result of liturgical “copycatism” but through a consensus achieved by scholars working independently on the historical sources. That consensus has entered the ecumenical dialogue.

After over forty years use of that new *ordo*, there have been increasing calls for its evaluation in the light of those decades of pastoral experience. What have come to be called the “soft spots” of the *ordo* (the gathering or “entrance” rite; the “prayers of the people” [*oratio fidelium*] and their relationship to the positioning of the Peace and the Lord’s Prayer; the place [if any] for a penitential rite) are all presently the subject of initiatives for

² Interestingly, some Old Catholic churches still use, for example, the Roman baptismal rite for infants and small children even though I would suggest that it is fundamentally incompatible with an Old Catholic theology of Christian Initiation.

reform. These, however, are the material for another article. It is the eucharistic prayer that will be our focus here.

2. The length of the eucharistic prayer

Over the past years, I have heard lay people increasingly refer to the eucharistic prayer as “the long prayer”. At first, this came to me as a great shock – for is not the eucharistic prayer the central proclamation of the faith at every eucharistic assembly?³

The only cleric I remember who had for many years up to the time of his death in 2002 advocated shorter eucharistic prayers was Godfrey Diekmann O.S.B., monk of St. John’s Abbey (Collegeville MN), who, from before the Second World War, was a leader in the liturgical renewal movement in the United States and who served as a *peritus* at Vatican II. As someone who had always seen liturgical renewal as being driven foremost by pastoral needs, his concern was motivated by what he considered to be the undue length of the eucharistic prayers in the Roman Missal as they were experienced by the students attending daily mass at the preparatory school and undergraduate university both run by the abbey as well as by some of his own brother monks. Originally, I thought this a rather odd position for a liturgist to take. Surely the regular recitation of praise and thanksgiving for creation and the history of our salvation should be well received by all the faithful and that special provision needed to be made only for the very young. Upon hearing more frequent references to “the long prayer”, I began listening to the eucharistic prayers with a “third ear”.

First of all, I began to realise that, as a presbyter, I likely heard the eucharistic prayers in a different way than did the average member of the local eucharistic community. I became acutely aware of the fact that the eucharistic prayers are the longest single clerically dominated texts in the entire liturgy and reduce the laity to passive silence. With the exception of

³ It is important to remind ourselves that the use of the Nicene Creed in the Roman Rite is a relative novelty. Introduced into the West first in Spain as an anti-Arian measure (589) and to the Carolingian liturgy under Charlemagne and Alcuin as an anti-Adoptionist act (794), the Creed was resisted by Rome on the grounds that there was no need because there was no heresy in Rome! The Creed was finally admitted to Roman use with the imposition of the Romano-Germanic Pontifical by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry II in 1014. By this time the *Canon missae* was recited *sotto voce* (and in Latin) and so could hardly be claimed to be a proclamation of the faith of the whole assembly.

the opening dialogue, the *Sanctus/Benedictus* and the “Memorial Acclamation” (where it is used), the eucharistic prayer is prayed aloud entirely by a presbyter or the bishop when present. In the average community, it is one voice alone that is heard throughout the prayer and where there are other voices they are those of other presbyters. While it can be argued rightly that the presider prays the eucharistic prayer in the name of the entire assembly, the reduction of the laity to a passive role certainly gives some justification for the epithet “the long prayer”. Is this something that can be remedied or is it a phenomenon inherent in eucharistic praying itself? The answer, perhaps, is both “yes” and “no”.

On the “yes” side, we need to begin by acknowledging that Christians have a great deal for which to give thanks. Certainly, in the patristic church, before the emergence of fixed eucharistic prayers, the presider gave thanks “at great length” and “according to his ability”.⁴ Improvisation of the Eucharistic prayer was the responsibility of the presider just as was preaching.⁵ On the “no” side, we need to take seriously the remarks of those who have come to regard the eucharistic prayer as “the long prayer” and do what we can to address this perception discovering whether it is the result of the monotony of a single voice or because of the content of the prayers themselves. The objection cannot simply be dismissed out of hand.

3. The content of the eucharistic prayer (the pre-Sanctus)

3.1 Creation and salvation history

As suggested earlier, there is general agreement that, in the early church, the eucharistic prayer was the central weekly proclamation of what Christians believe. Upon examination, we can say that some of the prayers we have inherited do this better than others. Many of the classical models begin with a thanksgiving for God’s acts of creation, continue with a thanksgiving for God’s saving acts in the history of salvation and then turn to a thanksgiving for the work and the person of Christ often (but not al-

⁴ Justin, *First Apology* 65, 67.

⁵ *Apostolic Tradition* 9:4–5: “It is not altogether necessary [for the bishop] to recite the very same words which we gave before as though studying to say them by heart in his thanksgiving to God; but let each one pray according to his own ability. If indeed he is able to pray suitably with a grand and elevated prayer, this is a good thing. But if on the other hand he should pray and recite a prayer according to a brief form, no one shall prevent him. Only let his prayer be correct and orthodox.”

ways) incorporating the so-called “words of institution” before making the *anamnesis* of the Paschal mystery (Christ’s death and resurrection) and praying epiclestically for the transformation of the gifts and/or the community so that, through their reception, the faithful may become what they receive for the salvation of the world.

That is the shape of a few of the eucharistic prayers that can be found among the many eucharistic prayers of churches in the Union of Utrecht as well as many of the other western liturgical churches. It is, however, not the norm for western eucharistic prayers. More often than not thanksgiving for creation and salvation history is often brief at best. Lying behind this is what many liturgists today would call the undue and unfortunate importance given to the *Apostolic Tradition* [AT] which was, during the years when the present generation of eucharistic prayers were created, attributed to “Hippolytus of Rome” and generally regarded as the oldest extant witness to a western eucharistic prayer and, by many, as the oldest eucharistic prayer extant.

The general consensus among liturgists today, however, is that AT is a composite document, likely of eastern origin, and has gone through a number of recensions. AT, as we now have it, contains layers dating from between the third and fifth centuries – none of which can be attributed with any certainty to Hippolytus.⁶ Thus, the authoritative role attributed to the text at the time of the liturgical reforms of the last decades of the twentieth century must be modified.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, having used AT as a model for what was thought to be early western eucharistic praying, the prayer has had some very important benefits for the churches today – the most significant of these is, undoubtedly, ecumenical. Almost every western liturgical church has a version of the prayer from AT in its collection of eucharistic prayers and, in some languages, churches have worked together to produce a common translation of the text. Naturally, wherever Christians find themselves using common liturgical texts – either in their own communities or when gathered together ecumenically – we grow closer together in unity.

⁶ See, for example: Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2002); Marcel Metzger, “Enquêtes autour de la prétendue «Tradition apostolique»”, in: *Ecclesia Orans* 9 (1992), pp. 7–36; idem, “Nouvelles perspectives pour la prétendue «Tradition apostolique»”, in: *Ecclesia Orans* 5 (1988), pp. 241–259.

However, *AT* also had some negative effects on the development of western eucharistic praying becoming, as it did, the principal model for the shape of many new eucharistic prayers. This has led to a considerable impoverishment of what is included in that for which we give thanks. After the eucharistic dialogue, the prayer in *AT* immediately becomes Christological: “We render thanks to you, God, through your beloved child Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you sent to us as saviour and redeemer and angel of your will ...”⁷ The only allusion to creation is in a later reference to the same child Jesus Christ “...who is your inseparable word through whom you have made all things ...”⁸ Reference to God’s saving acts in salvation history is also limited to the Christological, beginning with “... [Christ whom] you sent from heaven into the virgin’s womb”⁹, and this remains so until the epicletic petition after the anamnesis.

Consequently, the rich fabric of themes that could emerge in a thanksgiving for creation and from a recitation of God’s mighty saving acts in salvation history that are missing from *AT* are also missing from the newly-composed prayers that used *AT* as a model for their structure. So, too, is any extended thanksgiving for the life and work and Christ before his passion.

As a result, our eucharistic praying has become very narrowly focused and, in an age in which creation and our stewardship of it is paramount in the concerns of many today, creation appears to be ignored generally during our central act of praise and thanksgiving when we come together at the table. So too, failure to give thanks for God’s saving acts throughout human history disconnects Christians from the whole “story” of their salvation. Christ’s work among us is often focused on his passion alone.

This situation is exacerbated by the development of the “proper preface” which is unique to the western liturgical tradition and a phenomenon that led to the dismemberment of the eucharistic prayer. Instead of understanding the eucharistic prayer as an integral whole beginning with the dialogue and continuing to the concluding doxology and Amen, the preface came to be understood as a separate liturgical unit detached from the Canon and ceased to be considered a part of the eucharistic prayer itself. Because prefaces are highly specific in their character and usually related directly to the feast or commemoration for which they were composed

⁷ Bradshaw et al., *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, p. 38.

⁸ Loc cit.

⁹ Loc cit.

(either Christological, doctrinal [e.g. Trinity Sunday], or commemorative [the Mother of God or a saint]) the use of a preface has also tended either to exclude thanksgiving for creation and salvation history or, at best, to misplace it.

3.1.1 In the following I present a number of examples taken from newly revised Old Catholic service books:

- Twenty-one of the twenty-three eucharistic prayers in the present German Old Catholic Sacramentary¹⁰ provide for a variable preface. Of the prayers with “fixed” prefaces¹¹ only the “preface” for Eucharistic Prayer [EP] IV makes mention of creation along with a reference to the covenant and the prophets as acts in salvation history:

It is indeed right and a good thing that we give you thanks, holy Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ. You made the visible and the invisible. You created us in your own image and made a covenant with us. You revealed your promises through the words of your prophets. Therefore with all the angels ...¹²

The fixed “preface” for EP VII begins with a thanksgiving for creation but makes no mention of any event in salvation history between creation and the Incarnation:

It is indeed right and a good thing to thank you always and everywhere, holy Father, creator of heaven and earth. You made everything through your word and saw that it was good. You created us in your image that we may share in your life and your glory may shine through us. When the fullness of time had come, you gave us Jesus ...¹³

The variable prefaces do not compensate adequately for this omission. Of the forty-five variable prefaces in the German *Messbuch*, only five (Holy Trinity, Ordinary Prefaces III and V, Harvest Thanksgiving and Marriage) make reference to creation, and those references are often quite brief:

¹⁰ *Die Feier der Eucharistie im Katholischen Bistum der Alt-Katholiken in Deutschland* (Bonn, 2006) [hereafter: DSac]. The English translations are those of Dr. Thaddeus A. Schnitker available on <http://www.alt-katholisch.de/information/liturgie/altar-book.html>.

¹¹ EPs III, IV, VII and XXI.

¹² Eucharistiegebet IV, in: DSac, p. 298.

¹³ Eucharistiegebet VII, in: DSac, p. 310.

It is indeed right ... to praise you, the source of all life. You have created, redeemed and sanctified us.¹⁴

It is indeed right ... to praise you with all creation ...¹⁵

The most extensive thanksgiving for creation among the variable prefaces, interestingly, is that to be used at the celebration of a marriage – a text heard only occasionally by most people:

It is indeed right, and a good and joyful thing, to praise you, our Father, and to magnify the work of your creation. For you created us humans in your image and gave us the gift of love. You join man and woman in matrimony to a holy fellowship in Christ and promise your blessing to their covenant. Therefore we bless you ...¹⁶

Salvation history also gets rather short shrift in the variable prefaces. Only Ordinary Preface V recounts any aspect of salvation history between creation and the Incarnation:

We thank you, God our Father, for you called us to life. You do not abandon us on our way and hear us when we cry to you. You once led your people Israel through the wilderness. Today you accompany the church in the power of your Spirit. ...¹⁷

What appears as a general indifference to thanksgiving for creation and God's acts in salvation history is compensated for in the *post-Sanctus* in some of the eucharistic prayers. EP VI, for example, gives thanks for the constant role of the Spirit in creation and salvation history:

We praise you, God, holy Father, and glorify you in your holy, life giving Spirit who in the beginning hovered over the waters, who spoke through the prophets, who gave light and strength to your chosen people. When the fullness of time had come ...¹⁸

The *post-Sanctus* of EP XII begins with a poetic reflection on the relationship between the gathered community and God's work of creation and redemption:

¹⁴ Präfation: Dreifaltigkeit, in: DSac, p. 239.

¹⁵ Allgemeine Präfation III, in: DSac, p. 247.

¹⁶ Präfation: Ehe, in: DSac, p. 273.

¹⁷ Allgemeine Präfation V, in: DSac, p. 249.

¹⁸ Eucharistiegebet VI, in: DSac, p. 250.

Indeed, we stand before you in wonder and gratitude, Creator of the universe. You called our liveable planet into existence, our earth. In its fruitfulness and in the manifold creatures we sense your motherly care, long before our restlessness and ambition could take hold of it. You became particularly close to us in Jesus ...¹⁹

EP XV gives thanks for God's self-revelation to Moses and recalls the Exodus:

All-merciful Father, we praise you and thank you: you told Moses your name and revealed yourself as God-with-humans. You led your people Israel through the desert, day and night, in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. When the fullness of time had come ...²⁰

Finally EP XXIII, to be used at the commemoration of the departed, recalls gift of life in human creation:

Holy, immortal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, we praise and thank you because your mercy is infinite. For love you created us mortals and breathed in us life from your immortal life.²¹

When reviewed as a whole, the eucharistic prayers in the German *Messbuch* give thanks for creation only occasionally and reference to God's acts in salvation history between the creation and Incarnation are extremely limited and narrowly focused.

- Of the five eucharistic prayers in the Christian Catholic Church of Switzerland, four pay heed to creation and salvation history only in some variable prefaces and, then, quite briefly.²² One, however (EP IV), written with a fixed preface and intended specifically for use with children, waxes poetic:

We thank you great and merciful God, and praise you through our Lord Jesus Christ. You have created all things, the vastness of the universe, the number of the stars, the still of the night and the light of day. You allow the grasses and flowers to grow and bloom, you give sunshine and rain to the grain in the field and the fruit in the trees.

¹⁹ Eucharistiegebet XII, in: DSac, p. 332.

²⁰ Eucharistiegebet XV, in: DSac, p. 344.

²¹ Eucharistiegebet XXIII, in: DSac, p. 377.

²² *Gebet- und Gesangbuch der Christkatholischen Kirche der Schweiz* (Basel, 2004) [hereafter: ChSac]. Präfation: Zeit vor der Fastenzeit, in: ChSac no. 145, p. 370; Pfingsten, in: ChSac no. 176, p. 180, and Propheten, in: ChSac no. 222, p. 220.

You fill the land with numerous animals, birds in the air, and the waters with fish: the whole earth is full of your goodness.

The peoples are your creation and you have given them everything that is needed for their use and care.

So we praise and glorify you with all creation, and join in one voice in the hymn of your angels and saints:²³ [*Sanctus*]

The post-Sanctus continues the theme of thanksgiving for creation:

We praise you good Father, you care for your creation for all time. You will keep all people in your love, although they would not listen to you, and only followed their own will. You have not left them to death and despair, but sent your son: He came to us and to save the whole world...²⁴

after which there is a recollection of Christ's command to remember his death and resurrection which then leads into the *verba testamenti*. While the prayer might be said to present a rather romanticised view of creation and ignores its fragility and human responsibility for its preservation, it would certainly relate well to children's sense of awe and thanksgiving and may also be well inculcated for many adult Swiss Old Catholics.

- Of the twelve eucharistic prayers in the Dutch Old Catholic liturgy²⁵ six require a variable preface. These, as in some of the earliest Roman collections of mass propers, are printed with each set of propers and are, consequently, very specific to that day. Relatively few make mention of creation or salvation history. On the other hand, half of the eucharistic prayers (2, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 12) are fulsome in their thanksgiving for creation and salvation history. Perhaps of all contemporary Old Catholic books, the Dutch liturgy achieves the best balance in its thanksgiving for creation and salvation history.
- The variable prefaces in the new Czech sacramentary also fall into the Christological specificity of variable prefaces in general and are scant on thanksgiving for creation or salvation history. Of its fifty-six variable prefaces two (General Prefaces II and III) have the community

²³ Eucharistiegebet IV, in: ChSac no. 114, p. 148.

²⁴ Loc. cit.

²⁵ In preparing this text I only had access to the pew version: *Kerkboek van de Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland* (Baarn, 1993) [hereafter: NSac].

“giving thanks with all creation”²⁶ and a third (General Preface V), a Czech translation of the German General Preface V, gives thanks that God “called us to life,” and that “you do not abandon us on our way and hear us when we cry to you. You once led your people Israel through the wilderness.”²⁷

Some of the forty-eight eucharistic prayers, however, make up for this. The theme of creation occurs in at least ten of the prayers. Mention is often brief and tends to concentrate on God’s creation of, and love for, humanity (EPs 24, 35, 41, 43, 45, and 48). Accounts of salvation history are less frequent and also generally brief. The first eucharistic prayer for Advent speaks of “human history which is the history of salvation.”²⁸ It is the theme of the exodus, however, that recurs most often. One eucharistic prayer speaks of Moses and God leading the people of Israel through the desert,²⁹ another of God leading Israel through the desert in ancient times³⁰ and a third of God’s promise to Abraham to lead him to an unknown land and future.³¹ The inclusion of Roman EP IV “in the Byzantine style” provides the most extensive thanksgiving for both creation and salvation history.³²

3.1.2 A solution to the “impoverished” nature of our eucharistic prayers needs considerable attention and requires a reassessment of that for which we give thanks. That task will take on a different character once we begin to see our eucharistic prayers serving as the principal proclamation of the church’s faith. We cannot give thanks for everything in every eucharistic prayer, that would lead to very turgid prayers. At the same time, it is seriously problematic when some themes virtually never occur in our eucharistic prayers. Ideally, Old Catholic liturgical commissions should develop their own eucharistic prayers paying close attention to thanksgiving for creation and salvation history. To begin the process, there are models to which the drafters of prayers might turn for inspiration.

²⁶ Preface všeobecná II and III. *Eucharistická slavnost starokatolické církve* [CzSac] (Prague, 2011), pp. 248, 249.

²⁷ Preface všeobecná V, in: CzSac, p. 251.

²⁸ Anafora adventní I, in: CzSac, p. 272.

²⁹ 31. Anafora, in: CzSac, p. 366.

³⁰ Anafora synodální I, in: CzSac, p. 379.

³¹ 46. Anafora, in: CzSac, p. 411.

³² Anafora římská IV, in: CzSac, p. 342–343.

Here are two examples – one ancient, one contemporary. The first is the English ecumenical translation of the anaphora of Basil of Caesarea³³ and the second is from the *Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada*.

Basil provides a very fulsome example of thanksgiving for creation which then turns to a recollection of God's unfailing merciful loving kindness which, in turn, becomes Christological but makes *anamnesis* of aspects of the work of Christ that are often omitted in many eucharistic prayers.

It is truly right to glorify you, Father, and to give you thanks;
for you alone are God, living and true, dwelling in light
inaccessible from before time and for ever.

Fountain of life and source of all goodness, you made all
things and fill them with your blessing; you created them to
rejoice in the splendour of your radiance.

Countless throngs of angels stand before you to serve you
night and day; and, beholding the glory of your presence,
they offer you unceasing praise. Joining with them, and
giving voice to every creature under heaven, we acclaim you,
and glorify your Name, as we sing

[Sanctus]

We acclaim you, holy Lord, glorious in power. Your mighty
works reveal your wisdom and love. You formed us in your
own image, giving the whole world into our care, so that, in
obedience to you, our Creator, we might rule and serve all
your creatures. When our disobedience took us far from you,
you did not abandon us to the power of death. In your mercy
you came to our help, so that in seeking you we might find you.
Again and again you called us into covenant with you,
and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.
Father, you loved the world so much that in the fullness of time
you sent your only Son to be our Saviour. Incarnate by
the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, he lived as one of us,
yet without sin. To the poor he proclaimed the good news
of salvation; to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy. To
fulfill your purpose he gave himself up to death; and, rising
from the grave, destroyed death, and made the whole creation new.
And, that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for him

³³ For an account of the prayer's origins and development see: Leonel Mitchell, "The Alexandrian Anaphora of St. Basil of Caesarea: Ancient Source of 'A Common Eucharistic Prayer'," in: *Anglican Theological Review* 58 (1976), pp. 194–206.

who died and rose for us, he sent the Holy Spirit, his own first gift for those who believe, to complete his work in the world, and to bring to fulfilment the sanctification of all. When the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end; at supper with them he took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said ...³⁴

Such a prayer solves some of the problems noted earlier. The florid style may well be too rich for the average “western” parish on a weekly basis. In those churches I know that use this eucharistic prayer, many often reserve it for festivals or principal feasts. The theme of thanksgiving for creation forms a bridge between the pre- and post-Sanctus. Those using the prayer as a model (rather than adopting the prayer as a whole) might want to consider other variations such as confining the creation material to the pre-Sanctus and then beginning the post-Sanctus with a thanksgiving for God’s acts in salvation history.

The modern prayer contains a shorter thanksgiving for creation which quickly turns to a recitation of salvation history. The post-Sanctus uses the theme of the praise of all creation for its creator which then becomes Christological. The Christological portion is more expansive than that often encountered and gives thanks for aspects of the life and work of Christ before the passion which is a contrast to most of the present eucharistic prayers used by Old Catholics.

It is indeed right that we should praise you,
gracious God, for you created all things.
You formed us in your own image:
male and female you created us.
When we turned away from you in sin,
you did not cease to care for us,
but opened a path of salvation for all people.
You made a covenant with Israel,
and through your servants Abraham and Sarah
gave the promise of a blessing to all nations.
Through Moses you led your people

³⁴ Eucharistic Prayer 6, *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada* [BAS] (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985), pp. 207–208, or Eucharistic Prayer D in the American *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 373–374, and in the liturgical texts of a number of other churches.

from bondage into freedom;
through the prophets
you renewed your promise of salvation.
Therefore, with them, and with all your saints
who have served you in every age,
we give thanks and raise our voices
to proclaim the glory of your name.

[*Sanctus*]

Holy God, source of life and goodness,
all creation rightly gives you praise.
In the fullness of time,
you sent your Son Jesus Christ,
to share our human nature,
to live and die as one of us,
to reconcile us to you,
the God and Father of all.
He healed the sick
and ate and drank with outcasts and sinners;
he opened the eyes of the blind
and proclaimed the good news of your kingdom
to the poor and to those in need.
In all things he fulfilled your gracious will.
On the night ...³⁵

3.2 *Thanksgiving for the person and work of Christ*

As mentioned above, many of the eucharistic prayers used by Old Catholics are rather limited in what they say about the person and the work of Christ. This may have its origin in the ongoing influence of the *Canon missae* which concerned itself at this point with offering and not thanksgiving. Thus, the *Quam oblationem* turns immediately to the *verba testamenti* without thanksgiving of any sort.

Bless and approve our offering: make it acceptable to you, an offering in spirit and in truth. Let it become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ, your only Son, our Lord.

The day before he suffered he took bread in his sacred hands and looking up to heaven, to you, his almighty Father, he gave you thanks and praise. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said take ...³⁶

³⁵ BAS, pp. 193–194.

³⁶ *Canon missae: Quam oblationem* and *Qui pridie*.

Contemporary Old Catholic prayers often follow in a similar vein sometimes interpolating an epicletic petition between the offering and the *verba testamenti*:

Our Father, God of power and might, fill our praise with your glory. Bless this gift, complete it, accept it as rendering present the one sacrifice of our Lord. Send your Holy Spirit upon us and our eucharist, sanctify this bread to be the body of Christ and this cup to be the blood of Christ that the Holy Spirit, the creator, fill the word of your beloved Son. On the night in which he was handed over, he took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, saying ...³⁷

and as many examples without the epicletic petition:

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of all mercy and God of all consolation. You loved the world so much that you gave your only Son so that all who believe in him might not perish but have eternal life. He instituted a lasting memorial of his saving deeds. On the night he was handed over, he took bread and gave you thanks, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying ...³⁸

While there are certainly examples of Old Catholic eucharistic prayers where there is a more fulsome thanksgiving for the person and work of Christ other than the incarnation and the passion, they tend to be a minority. This omission certainly needs to be addressed as the various Old Catholic churches consider the question of eucharistic praying.

4. The problem of the variable preface – a possible solution

As was noted earlier, because the variable prefaces by and large tend to be written for a specific season or feast and are overwhelmingly Christological, they displace or, often, replace thanksgiving for creation and salvation history from the beginning of the eucharistic prayer and turn immediately to a Christological thanksgiving. This can be remedied without great difficulty. There is no absolute reason why the variable part of the eucharistic prayer must fall immediately after the eucharistic dialogue. Both the *Alternative Services Book* and *Common Worship* of the Church of England provide for the possibility of short, seasonal, thanksgivings to be inserted part way through an otherwise fixed pre-Sanctus. Here is one example:

³⁷ Eucharistiegebet XIII, in: DSac, p. 336.

³⁸ Eucharistiegebet III, in: DSac, p. 294.

[Eucharistic Dialogue]

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our joy,
at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise,
holy Father, heavenly King, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord.
For he is your living Word;
through him you have created all things from the beginning,
and formed us in your own image.
Through him you have freed us from the slavery of sin,
giving him to be born as man to die upon the cross;
you raised him from the dead
and exalted him to your right hand on high.
Through him you have sent upon us your holy and life-giving Spirit,
and made us a people for your own possession.

[Proper Preface, when appropriate]

And now we give you thanks because you raised him gloriously from the
dead. For he is the true Paschal Lamb who was offered for us and has
taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and
by rising again he has restored us to eternal life.³⁹

Therefore with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your great and glorious name,
for ever praising you and saying:⁴⁰

[Sanctus]

Thirty-three of these “short prefaces” were provided in the *Alternative Service Book* (1980) covering the *Temporale*, *Sanctorale*, “votives” (e.g. Christian unity) and the various pastoral liturgies (marriage, funerals, ect.). *Common Worship* (2001) also includes these “short prefaces”, placing them with the “variable material” to be used during the course of the liturgical year. For each occasion, *Common Worship* also provides an “extended preface” (i.e. a preface that would displace any fixed material in a eucharistic prayer before the *Sanctus*). While this decision to make provision for both possibilities might be understandable politically its effect on the shape and content of the eucharistic prayers is regrettable.

³⁹ As an illustration, I have inserted one of the prefaces provided for the Resurrection.

⁴⁰ First Eucharistic Prayer and Preface 13 for the Resurrection, in: *The Alternative Service Book 1980: Services authorized for use in the Church of England in conjunction with the Book of Common Prayer* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980), pp. 130–131; 155.

While Old Catholics work on new eucharistic prayers, attention might well be paid to the model in which the variable portion of the eucharistic prayer is postponed. This would then allow for a constant place for thanksgiving for creation and salvation history (so often omitted in the present prayers) as well as more specific thanksgiving in the course of the liturgical year (*Temporale* and *Sanctorale*), votives and the passages of human life.

Everything that has been said so far could lead the reader to think that the present eucharistic prayers need to be lengthened – the very opposite of the problem of the “long” prayer. Do we risk trying to redress two problems that are ultimately mutually exclusive? Not necessarily so. This depends, in part, on how we respond to several questions.

5. How many eucharistic prayers?

The move from one eucharistic prayer to many was a very bold step for Roman Catholics, Old Catholics and Anglicans all of whom had been firmly fixed in a tradition in which there was but one prayer. At first, the number of new prayers was fairly small; now, in some churches, they number in the dozens. The original rationale for more than one prayer was not simply a plea for a need for variety but also the suggestion that eucharistic life would be enriched by the introduction of the “genius” found in the prayers of other ecclesial communities – hence, for example, the inclusion of a Byzantine-style prayer among the first generation of new prayers.

Based on the premise that the eucharistic prayer is the fundamental proclamation of the faith of the community, it was often suggested that a greater number of prayers would allow for a richer expression of that faith. It was hoped that the words of the new prayers would take root in the hearts of those participating regularly in the eucharistic assembly just as many of the faithful could recite from memory large portions of the one eucharistic prayer that was then in use. That apology could be made when the number of the prayers was limited to six or, perhaps, ten but it is untenable now when the prayers number in the dozens and a prayer might not be used more than once or twice in the course of a year.

When presented with this question, one is not infrequently told that parishes decide on which prayers they will use, making a small selection from those available in the sacramentary. When pushed, it usually turns out that it is those who preside and *not* the parish as a whole or a worship committee who makes the choice so that the community as a whole passively accepts the choice made by the voice who prays them while the

faithful listen passively. One must then ask if this limited selection of prayers from which words and phrases certainly could be expected to take root reflect a careful balance of themes which might be considered necessary to express the richness of the faith – or do they just express the preferred theology of the one who presides?

Listening to eucharistic prayers at least weekly, one is left with the impression that there is great quantity but not necessarily interesting variety. Perhaps those who prepare the next generation of eucharistic prayers might consider reducing the number of prayers in some sacramentaries and assure that the prayers that are included present a careful balance of theological themes so that a rich texture of images are offered to celebrating communities and that the vocabulary used as well as the literary quality of the texts commend themselves to the hearts and memories of the faithful.

6. A word on the *verba testamenti*

If there is one set of words that remains all but invariable in our eucharistic prayers, it is what are variously called the *verba testamenti*, the institution narrative, or the words of consecration. They consist of about 100 words usually beginning “... on the night he was handed over to suffering and death ...” and ending “...whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.” Of all that is prayed in the eucharistic prayers, these words are probably imprinted in people’s minds like no others.

It is in that context that we dare ask the question of whether they *must* find a place in every Old Catholic eucharistic prayer? We know that the words were not a part of the earliest Christian practice⁴¹ and to this day do not find a place in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari used in some of the churches following the East Syrian tradition. Within the eucharistic prayer they do not have the character of thanksgiving but, rather, narrative. Their introduction into eucharistic prayers was most likely intended to provide a context for what Christian communities were doing when the first generations of Christians who had known actual table fellowship with Jesus or

⁴¹ The institution narrative is absent from the earliest version of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, the *Sacramentary of Serapion*, and the eucharistic prayers known to Cyril/John of Jerusalem in his *Mystagogical Catechesis* as well as in those of Theodore of Mopsuestia. See: Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (London: SPCK, 2004), pp. 128–135. In fact, there is no clear evidence that they were part of any Eucharistic Prayer before Nicaea.

knew someone who had had all died and those who had not experienced that table fellowship needed to be reminded that it was the breaking of bread and sharing of a cup that evoked his presence. One way of doing that was the use of the bread and cup narratives that had come to be associated with the Last Supper in the synoptics and 1 Corinthians 11. That however, is not the only way that such an evocation is possible. The account of the meal at Emmaus (Lk 24:13–35) serves the same purpose. Can we imagine the possibility of composing a eucharistic prayer in which a re-telling of the Emmaus account serves the same purpose as the *verba*? The Old Catholic appeal to the use of the Early Church certainly obliges us to take the question seriously. One can hardly invoke Vincent of Lerins’ “quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus” (everywhere, always and by all) to justify the unerring use of the *verba* in every eucharistic prayer.

The German EP V gives us some basic material from which such a prayer could be crafted:

We praise you, holy Father, for you are always with us on our way, especially when Jesus, your Son, gathers us for the meal of love; like the disciples at Emmaus, he interprets the Scriptures and breaks the bread for us. [May his presence be known to us in the breaking of the bread.]

Therefore we ask you, holy God: send your Spirit upon bread and wine, so that Jesus Christ be present in our midst with his body and blood ...⁴²

This suggestion is not intended to offer novelty for its own sake but, rather, to help us to reflect on the question of eucharistic presence. Old Catholics (at least their theologians and, one hopes, clergy) would want to affirm that “consecration” is through prayer and not by formula. The *verba* constitute a narrative which, as I have suggested, contextualise the eucharistic action. We do not affirm that they are a formula that “consecrates”. Yet the way we celebrate the eucharist often puts the lie to that affirmation. It would not be difficult to find Old Catholic parishes that isolate the words from the eucharistic prayer as a whole by presbyters bending low over the elements and addressing them (rather than God and the gathered assembly) in an altered voice, or elevating the elements after the *verba* or ringing bells after the words over both bread and cup. All of these communicate to those watching that the *verba* somehow effect the presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements.

⁴² Eucharistiegebet V, in: DSac, p. 302.

This is a question that has pervaded western culture since the middle ages. School children learn that the “*hocus pocus*” they hear when a magician comes to perform at their birthday party or when they, themselves, play at magic⁴³ has its origins in *hoc est enim corpus meum* and are told by their teachers that it is with these words that the priest makes Christ present on the altar.⁴⁴ It is regularly reaffirmed on the television at Christmas eve or on other great papal occasions when commentators (who seem to know more about the media than they do about theology) regularly inform their listeners during the eucharistic prayer as the *verba* draw near that “this is the most sacred moment of the mass, and when the Holy Father pronounces the words ‘*hoc est enim ...*’, the bread and wine will become the body and blood of Christ.”

We must ask if a “moment of consecration” theology is so deeply ingrained in the “popular” view of Christianity that it cannot slowly be replaced by an understanding of eucharistic consecration that is consonant with a contemporary understanding of eucharistic presence.

7. The eucharistic prayer as sign-act

Much of what has been written above has tended to treat the eucharistic prayer as if it were primarily a matter of words and that the renewal of the eucharist is solely dependent upon composing new prayers that paid heed to some of the theological concerns delineated. Not so. The entire liturgy is fundamentally a worded sign-act in which all that is seen and heard teaches. The eucharistic prayer cannot be extracted from the context within which it is prayed. Thus we must turn to gesture and sound.

7.1 Gesture

When observing some celebrations of the eucharist, the onlooker is left with the impression that the eucharistic prayer is not so much a prayer but a formula or incantation containing “magic” words and gestures which are

⁴³ It must be admitted that Harry Potter, his friends and his enemies, have given children a lexicon of magic formulae that extends well beyond *hocus pocus* and, perhaps, has improved their latinity!

⁴⁴ It is more likely that the etymology has its origins in English and Dutch post-reformation parody, but that nuance seems to escape those who pass on the “popular” etymology.

intended to effect some change in the elements. Such observations, which are not uncommon, call us to a serious re-evaluation of Eucharistic presidency. “Manual acts, rather than pointing to ‘a moment of consecration,’ should signify that Christ becomes present through the entire eucharistic action of the community, gathering, remembering, and giving thanks, and breaking bread together.”⁴⁵ This implies that the traditional gesture of prayer – the *orans* – that Christians inherited from their forebears in the faith and which are depicted in the oldest images of Christians at prayer should be the normative gesture for the presider at the eucharist. (It could also be a posture assumed by others standing by the altar as well as by all those participating in the eucharistic assembly for it is a possession of all Christians and not a monopoly of the ordained or those who identify themselves as “charismatics”.)

Other gestures such as signs of the cross, touching the elements during the eucharistic prayer or pointing to them need to be reconsidered and, probably, eliminated. These gestures are a much later development for the presider (and very recent for the so-called concelebrants) and are closely related to an understanding of the eucharistic prayer as the time when the presider “does” something to effect eucharistic presence rather than it being the action of God and the Holy Spirit that effects eucharistic presence. Such gestures, when viewed “from the pews” cannot but look like some sort of manipulation of the elements and lead some to observe that they have been at a “conjuring act” or a “magic” show.

This cannot but do damage to an Old Catholic understanding of eucharistic presence which would be better promoted should the presider remain in the *orans* position throughout the prayer (including during the *verba*), touching the vessels containing the elements only when they are elevated during the final doxology (*per ipsum*) (the vessel containing the bread in one hand and the chalice – unless it is being held by a deacon – in the other). Any touching of the elements during the *verba* or epicletic sign leads to a “moment of consecration” theology which Old Catholics have eschewed. Attempts to take the many signs of the cross made over the elements in the *Canon missae* (particularly in the *Te igitur*, *Quam oblationem*, and *Per ipsum*) and to transpose them onto the eucharistic prayers found in contemporary Old Catholic liturgical books is to misunderstand

⁴⁵ Ruth A. Meyers, “One Bread, One Body: Ritual, Language and Symbolism in the Eucharist,” in: David R. Holeton, ed., *Our Thanks and Praise: The Eucharist in Anglicanism Today* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), pp. 82–98, here 91.

the theology of the modern prayers and to impose on them a sacerdotal piety that is completely alien to them. Perhaps one reason why many modern Old Catholic sacramentaries do not interpolate crosses into their eucharistic prayers is not because that it is beyond the skills of modern typographers but, simply, because the signs of the cross do not belong!⁴⁶

7.2 Music and the eucharistic prayer

Jewish table prayer is sung and the Christian eucharistic prayer, developing from its roots in these table prayers, was normatively sung. It is only when, in the middle ages, the “said” or “low” mass emerged as the most common form of celebration and, eventually, became normative did song cease to characterise eucharistic celebration. Hence, when some modern Old Catholic sacramentaries are published without containing a single note this seems to create scandal among few, if any.

Song is the fundamental expression of joy and praise. The angels’ annunciation of Christ’s birth was immediately followed by song: “Glory to God ...” Doxology, the first way of doing theology, is characterised by song. While few Christians would question the place of hymnody in worship it is curious how often there is no objection when some of the basic songtexts of the liturgy (Gloria, Sanctus) are said even though the community might sing hymns or choruses during other points in the liturgy. Many, if not most, Christians seem to have forgotten that the eucharistic prayer is also a song of praise and find it not the least bit odd when there is only a vestige of song when all join in singing the final doxology (*Per ipsum*) or Amen or when the entire prayer is recited without a single note.⁴⁷

Song is one of the most uniting of human activities. Joining voices in song has a quite different effect on a gathering than does reciting a text. Certainly, song changes the character of a text. Singing a prayer can make it more joyful and can give it a solemnity or a sense of increased impor-

⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that the German Sacramentary is very explicit about what the presider is to do with her/his hands during the eucharistic prayer (i.e. when hands are to be raised in the “orans” position, held in the “epicletic” position or when they are to touch the bread or cup during the *verba* or to elevate them during the doxology). The Czech Sacramentary is devoid of any such rubrical instruction.

⁴⁷ This is a matter which varies from one Old Catholic church to another. For example, the German Sacramentary notes all the “prefaces” of its eucharistic prayers, whether fixed or variable, while the Czech Sacramentary is printed without a single note.

tance that it does not have if spoken. A sung text also can join a prayer with a larger tradition, linking the community to generations that have gone before. At the same time, if badly sung, it can make a text seem much longer – even tortuous. Either way, a brief reflection on the musical nature of the eucharistic prayer is of some importance.

There are ways to recover the musical character of the eucharistic prayer which can also be remedies to the “long prayer” syndrome. The composition of new eucharistic prayers with common refrains⁴⁸ sung by the entire assembly and which regularly punctuate the text can transform the prayer from a clerical monologue into a song of praise and thanksgiving owned by the whole community. Some of these prayers have the presider’s part set to a simple chant tone; sometimes, the presider’s part is “through-composed” which allows for a greater musical interest in the text. Sometimes, when presiders have difficulty keeping a melody, they can chant the prayer on a single note while the congregation quietly sings an ostinato. Whichever form is chosen, it becomes clearer that the prayer is the work of the whole community and that is not the presider who is doing something before a passive congregation. Communities already using such prayers attest that the general level of congregational engagement in the prayer is much higher and the sense that the prayer is an expression of the praise and thanksgiving of the community as a whole is greatly increased.

And if the presider claims not to be able to sing at all? This is probably not sufficient reason to deprive the whole community of song during the eucharistic prayer. The simplest solution is to have the presider pray the text in a spoken voice while the assembly sings the refrains. The experience of communities finding themselves in this situation has often been to maintain an ostinato (best of all in several voices) while the presider prays her/his part. In all of these cases, the engagement of the assembly is considerably greater than it was when they were reduced to passivity when the presider alone was heard.

⁴⁸ Existing prayers from various traditions use refrains such as: “Glory to you for ever and ever”; “We praise, you, we bless you, we thank you”; “Glory to God in the highest”; “Hosanna in the highest”; “Amen, amen, amen”. In choosing or composing refrains, the cadence and singability of a text should be a major factor in dictating the choice of the refrain.

8. Concelebrants

The unity of the eucharistic prayer is obscured when it is divided between various presbyters and not clearly presided over by the principal celebrant alone.

The introduction of “concelebrants” into the liturgy in some Old Catholic churches needs some reflection. When it appeared in Roman Catholic use after Vatican II it was to meet the needs of a clerical culture in which each presbyter normally celebrated “his” mass each day. Even in places where there was a conventual or community mass, presbyters went off to side altars and chapels to celebrate simultaneous masses rather than participate in a single community celebration. The present Roman system of concelebration was devised, in part, to permit each presbyter to fulfil his “obligation” to celebrate daily. Such a requirement (real or imagined) does not exist within Old Catholicism and there is no need to imitate the Roman practice. If Old Catholics truly believe that the whole community celebrates the eucharist and that one person presides at the celebration, the very term “concelebrant” is anomalous and might well disappear from our liturgical vocabulary if applied to presbyters alone.

There is, however, no reason why others should not join the presider at the altar. (Normatively, the presider should be assisted by a deacon.) When the bishop presides it is appropriate that he also be joined by presbyters to signify the relationship between the college of presbyters and the bishop. When they stand with the bishop, however, several things are important. The principal sign of concelebration is one of presence, not gesture or word. It is appropriate that all presbyters assume and maintain the *orans* position throughout the prayer – from its beginning until the doxology. Signs or words that isolate one part of the prayer from the entire prayer are inappropriate just as they are for the presider alone. In fact, it probably is more detrimental to what Old Catholics believe about eucharistic presence when a large number of presbyters raise their hands towards the eucharistic elements and then audibly recite the *verba* or epiclesis.

After large diocesan events, those who have been sitting in the nave often remark on how they have felt cut off and isolated when “concelebrating” presbyters circle the altar and completely block their view from visual contact with the altar. How we arrange “concelebrants” says a great deal about how seriously we take the whole community as the celebrants of the eucharist.

9. Conclusion

As the churches celebrate the various anniversaries which are before us, we can be thankful for the gifts they have brought to the churches of the oecumene. For many, the greatest gift was, perhaps, of simply being a catalyst for processes that were already underway but seem to have been given a new momentum that quickly took root in the liturgical life of virtually all “western” churches. The liturgies generated played an unquestionable role in the renewal of the churches. It would be difficult to find active Old Catholics today who long to return to the liturgical life they knew before the Council.

As suggested at the beginning of this text, the decades of pastoral use of our “new” liturgical texts have revealed areas which need to be “fine-tuned” and sometimes rethought from first principles. This is natural as liturgy is organic and, sometimes, like good gardeners, we must prune branches that have gone wild or give particular nurture to new shoots which bear promise of richer blooms than those borne on old wood. A useful project, for example, would be a “fine tuning” of the 1982 Prayer of the Utrecht Union. Fundamentally, there is much good in it, but it would serve as a better model for the churches of the Union if the opening thanksgiving for creation and salvation history were enriched and if something more were said of the life and work of Christ.

The questions that have been raised here about the eucharistic prayer are among the many that are being discussed in a wide variety of churches today. Some have emerged from the closer study of historic liturgical texts. Others are questions posed by sacramental and systematic theologians as they reflect on the present generation of eucharistic prayers. Many, however, are questions raised by “ordinary” members of Christian communities who usually experience the liturgy “from the pew” and who, over the years, have become familiar with the eucharistic prayers through constant use and who have been formed by the texts they pray. Happily, this “formation” has not been uncritical and observations such as references “the long prayer” bid us all to reflect on what we are doing when we pray eucharistically. As far as texts go, this will usually be a question of making the good better in the light of pastoral experience. The questions of presidential style and the engagement of the whole community in the celebration of the eucharistic prayer may involve a rethinking of the question from first principles. In both word and action, it must be clear that the whole

community is the celebrant of the eucharist and it is to them that the eucharistic prayer belongs and not to the one who presides in their name.

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Im Eucharistiegebet geschieht ein fundamentaler Akt der Verkündigung des Glaubens der Kirche. In dem Mass, wie die Kirchen die bisweilen seit Jahrzehnten bestehende Verwendung neu entstandener liturgischer Texte evaluieren, rücken auch die Eucharistiegebete in den Fokus kritischer Rückfragen.

Was hat es zu bedeuten, dass das Eucharistiegebet in seinen verschiedenen Fassungen oft als das «lange Gebet» bezeichnet wird – wird also Länge als dominantes Kennzeichen wahrgenommen? Kann man hier kürzen, ohne das Gebet zu verstümmeln? Die meisten Eucharistiegebete thematisieren wenig oder gar nicht Schöpfung und Heilsgeschichte. Wie kann das auf geeignete Weise verbessert werden? Sind inhaltlich wechselnde Prae-Sanctus-Texte, d.h. Präfationen, ein Hindernis für eine thematische Ausgewogenheit des Eucharistiegebetes? Führt die grosse Zahl verschiedener Eucharistiegebete, wie sie einige Kirchen kennen, dazu, dass eucharistische Gebete in den Herzen der Mitfeiernden nicht mehr Wurzeln schlagen und daher deren Glauben nicht mehr prägen und nähren können? Wie kann das Eucharistiegebet stärker zu einem Akt der gemeinsamen Feier werden, anstatt den Eindruck eines klerikalen Monologs zu wecken? Stehen bestimmte Handlungen und Haltungen der Person, die der Eucharistiefeier vorsteht, im Widerspruch oder in Entsprechung zu dem, was über den Status und die Rolle der Gemeinde als Leib Christi und was über die Art der Gegenwart Gottes in der eucharistischen Versammlung gelehrt wird?

Mit einer intensiven und informierten Diskussion solcher und anderer Fragen lässt sich eine Basis gewinnen, auf der die altkatholischen Kirchen der Utrechter Union ihre liturgische Reform fortsetzen und eine neue Generation von Eucharistiegebeten schaffen können.