

THE EUCHARIST AND THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Prisco A. Cajés

The author puts forward some arguments and important points that can contribute to a more ecologically relevant understanding of the Eucharist. First, the author argues that there is a global ecological crisis urgently demanding an immediate response. Second, the author explains the meaning of the concept “integrity of creation” and briefly discusses the idea of “communion”. Finally, the author focuses on the concept of “transubstantiation” and suggests some insights that can be ecologically acceptable in a theology of the Eucharist.

INTRODUCTION

No one can deny that humans are helped and harmed by the condition of their environment. Though humans have the ability to rebuild their environment again and again, with their ever-growing knowledge and their ever-advancing technologies, they still live dependent on a natural ecology - on resources like soil, air, water, photosynthesis, climate, etc. To say it briefly, humans cannot be separated from the natural world because without the latter the former can never exist. Thus, humans are not seen as above nature. Instead, one should see humans in nature and with other creatures or beings in it.

All creatures in the natural world are interrelated and mutually interdependent. Thus there is a fundamental ecological unity of all parts of the whole natural world. This ecological unity is a communion that sustains and makes the natural world an integral whole more than just the sum total of its parts.

All creatures have integrity and each one has intrinsic value given by the Creator God, who is the Trinity. We, Christians, believe that

everything – the whole creation and each one of its parts - is created by the Triune God, who by declaring all of God’s creatures good has given to it the intrinsic value that comes from God’s own purpose and will. The significance of this truth is affirmed and made perfect by the Redemption of all creation brought about by Jesus Christ.

This truth is recognized and emphasized by an ecologically informed theology of the Eucharist that sees in every Eucharistic celebration the continuation of the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ in the transubstantiation of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Him who in His Person is the union of the Creator and God’s creation. The Eucharist in effecting the real and substantial presence of Jesus Christ brings the completion of God’s purpose of creating, which is the recapitulation of all in Christ and creation’s communion with the Triune God through and with Him.

We are writing a paper entitled “The Eucharist and the Ecological Crisis” - a broad topic that needs enough and concrete data to be satisfactorily explained. At the outset, we must confess that the data brought about in this piece may not be complete and some may need updating. However, we believe that these will do and are enough for our purpose.

Our main approach is first to show that there is a global ecological crisis, which demands an immediate human response. Then, we will explain the importance of the integrity of creation. We will argue, next, the need to have an ecologically informed Christology and a theology of the Eucharist that can respond to the urgent ecological crisis in today’s world. Thus, our approach is from Ecology to the Eucharist. Finally, we will zero in on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which can be regarded as an initial recapitulation of all creation in Christ. We will put importance on communion not only among humans but also the whole creation’s communion with God in and through Christ – strongly proposing that the Eucharistic celebration will be extended to the day-to-day living of every Christian in order to perpetuate this communion towards recapitulation in Christ. This is where connection with the ecological crisis and its solutions will be made. In conclusion, we will outline some recommendations. Therefore, we intend to discuss first the ecological crisis, and later we will attempt to examine the relationship and relevance of the Eucharist in that context.

ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Ecological crisis knows no boundaries. It is global. It may be located in one continent like Asia but it is global, especially in its effects. We propose to look at first the leading ecological problems in the world and later focus on a locality like the Samar Island in the Philippines.

The Urgent Global Ecological Problems

The global ecological crisis is worsening. This is not only what prophets of doom are saying but this is also what various scientific data are showing.

To concretely show this fact, we can take as the starting point global warming - no doubt the number one and the possible root of many other ecological problems today. Global warming is the observed increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans in recent decades and its projected continuation. The rise of the average temperature is due to the increase of the greenhouse gases concentrations. The greenhouse gases are released by activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, land clearing, etc.

An increase in global temperatures can in turn cause other changes, including rising sea level due to the melt down of the ice and glaciers in the Polar Regions and changes in the amount and pattern of precipitation. These changes may increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, tornados, typhoons, flash floods, heat waves, drought, and El Nino, La Nina or other phenomena of irregular weather patterns.

Another deadly impact of global warming is extreme heat wave. In 2003, extreme heat waves caused more than 20,000 deaths in Europe and more than 1,500 deaths in India.¹

1. National Resources Defense Council, "Global Warming Basics" (file://G\NRDC Global Warming Basics.htm) (accessed 16 March 2007), 2.

The Eucharist and the Ecological Crisis

A study in Southeast Asia, specifically the area that is called the ‘Coral Triangle’ – home to half of the world’s coral reefs (which are equivalent to rain forests under the sea) – showed the deadly effect of rising temperature caused by global warming on the water of the ocean and on an area as big as half of the United States of America where corals are now continually dying.² Leaders from the different countries – Philippines, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands – met to save this Coral Triangle.

In terms of emitting greenhouse gases for instance, in the U.S. alone, coal-burning power plants are the largest source of carbon dioxide pollution that accounts for 2.5 billion tons annually. Automobiles are the second largest source, which creates nearly 1.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually.³ At the moment in Asia, China emits the highest volumes of greenhouse gases more than any other country.

As the use of fossil fuel increases so do the greenhouse gases. In short, there is a real connection here: on the one hand, the increase of greenhouse gases caused by human activities using fossil fuels, and on the other hand, the increase of the average Earth temperature. The higher the amount of greenhouse gases, the higher the temperature on the Earth’s atmosphere is. Here is the locus of moral responsibility! Here is the human culpability!

In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was formulated and it is implemented until today. This Protocol is an agreement of all the countries in the world to reduce the volume of emission of the greenhouse gases.

Last December 2009 about 110 leaders and representatives of countries around the world gathered together in Copenhagen to try to formulate and to agree on a Treaty that will update the Kyoto Protocol and to reduce further the CO₂ emission. It must be noted that today the U.S.A., China and Russia are responsible for 80% of the world’s CO₂ emission – and their leaders also came. However,

2. (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 16, 2009), 1,17; (*The Philippine Star*, May 16, 2009), 1, 7.

3. *Ibid.*, 1.

powerful countries, including these three, could not come to terms, so at the end the proposed Copenhagen Treaty was not finalized.

According to the report of the United Nations, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “deforestation continues; and it continues at an unacceptable rate.”⁴ FAO said that an average of 18 million acres was lost annually in the last five years, down from 22 million acres a year between 1990 and 2000.⁵ The FAO report also accounted the growth from new planting and natural expansion of existing forests. The report covered 229 countries. Deforestation was most extensive in South America, where an average of 10.6 million acres were lost annually over the last five years, followed by Africa with 9.8 million acres.

The lack of trees to absorb carbon dioxide and the fact that in deforestation the carbon stored in trees is released into the atmosphere,⁶ show how deforestation has a double-effect in contributing to the problem of global warming. For instance, the plants and soil of tropical forests hold 460-575 billion metric tons of carbon worldwide, when each acre of tropical forest is cut and burned to establish cropland and pastures, the carbon that was stored in the tree trunks joins with oxygen and is released into the atmosphere as CO₂. Releasing CO₂ into the atmosphere enhances the greenhouse effect, and could contribute to an increase in global temperatures.

Recent research suggests that about half of the precipitation that falls in a tropical rain forest is a result of its moist, green canopy.⁷

On Earth, 5 to 80 million species of plants and animals comprise the “biodiversity” of the planet. Tropical rain forests - covering only 7% of the total dry surface of the Earth – hold over half of all these species. Many species require special habitats. Deforestation destroys their habitats. If their habitats are destroyed, they may

4. (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 15, 2007), 26.

5. USA TODAY, “U.N. Agency: Rate of Deforestation Slowing” (file://G:\USATODAY_com-U_N_agency Rate of deforestation slowing.htm) (accessed 30 March 2007), 1.

6. (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 15, 2007), 26.

7. Earth Observatory, “Tropical Deforestation” <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Library/Deforestation/printall.php> (accessed 27 March 2007), 3.

become extinct. Thus, deforestation is directly related to the loss of biodiversity.⁸

We do not really know exactly the rate of extinction but it is estimated that 137 species disappear worldwide each day.⁹ There are more than 16,000 species of animals and plants threatened with global extinction today including Polar bears and hippopotamuses according to the World Conservation Union (WCU).¹⁰ “The biodiversity loss is increasing, not slowing down” summed up the WCU.

Some species become extinct due to the destruction of their habitats. For instance, Polar bears are threatened by global warming and melting ice caps. They are conditioned for the icy environment and depend on Arctic ice floes for hunting seals. The abrupt changes of weather patterns due to global warming greatly affect their life cycles and natural patterns. It is predicted that in 45 years their population will decline to about 30%.¹¹

Over 800 million people go to bed hungry each night, mostly women and children.¹² Of this figure almost 200 million are children under five years of age. One child dies every seven seconds from hunger and related causes. Sadly, about 24,000 people die from the effects of hunger each day. That is one person every 3.5 seconds.¹³

There are 830 million undernourished people in the world today; 791 million of these live in developing countries. In Asia and Pacific region alone 525 million people or 17% of the total population of 3 billion suffer from under-nourishment. In Sub-Sahara Africa 180

8. Prisco A. Cajés, OFM, “Franciscanism: St. Francis Of Assisi And The Challenge Of Shifting To A New Paradigm” in *Prolepsis*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Calbayog City, Samar, Philippines: Christ the King College), 19.

9. Earth Observatory, “Tropical Deforestation” <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Library/Deforestation/printall.php> (accessed 27 March 2007), 4.

10. USA TODAY, “Group: 16,000 Species Said to Face Extinction” (file:///G:\USATODAY_com - Group 16,000 species said to face extinction.htm) (accessed 30 March 2007), 1.

11. *Ibid.*, 1.

12. Solcomhouse, “Hunger” (file:///G:\World Hunger.htm) (accessed 30 March 2007), 4.

13. *Ibid.*, 1.

million people or 33% of the total population of 539 million suffer from under-nourishment. In the Near East and North Africa, 33 million people or 9% of the total population of 360 million suffer from under-nourishment. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, 53 million people or 11% of the total population of 481 million suffer from under-nourishment. In sum, the largest numbers of people who suffer nutritional deficiencies live in Asia and the Pacific region.¹⁴ Poverty is the primary and the usual cause of hunger.

The above data about hunger will become very acute due to global warming. According to the survey by the world's top climate scientists, which was released April 6, 2007, the global warming will have intensified impacts on many natural systems.¹⁵ It will cause extreme weather changes and impacts in different regions in the world. Not only that ice glaciers melt down and sea levels rise or extinctions of species from the Amazon occur, there will be severe heat waves. In the equator, even a small increase of temperature will have already a huge negative effect of the harvest of crops. Poverty will intensify too. A large rise in temperatures could put up another 120 million people at risk of hunger. Hundreds of millions of people would suffer from water scarcity even with a small rise of temperature. Thus, the survey says that global warming could cause severe food and water shortages for millions of people by the year 2100.¹⁶

In Asia there is a need for safe drinking water at this very moment. Asia has 60% of the world's population but only has 36% of renewable water supply.¹⁷ This is already a major problem in the cities like Beijing and Bangkok. Mismanaged safe and drinking water supply, rapid urbanization and poor infrastructure, in the cities like Manila and Quezon City in the Philippines, Penang and Johor in Malaysia, Phnom Penh in Cambodia, New Delhi in India, etc., contribute to water problems in Asia.¹⁸

14. Ibid., 4-5.

15. (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 15, 2007), 26.

16. Ibid.

17. Glenn Van Zutphen, "The New Green" in *Reader's Digest* (Nov. 2008), 66.

18. Ibid., 67.

THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION AND JESUS CHRIST

The Meaning

The “integrity of creation” is a phrase and a concept that came to be used since the Vancouver assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1983. It refers to “the value of all creatures in themselves, for one another, and for God, and their interconnectedness in a diverse whole that has unique value for God.”¹⁹ It is the recognition of the intrinsic value of every creature and the maintenance of the integral relations of each creature to all the others and to its environment.²⁰

To understand the full meaning of this phrase and concept, let me use Larry Rasmussen’s ideas of the six dimensions of its meaning.²¹ The first dimension is that this concept describes *the integral functioning*²² of endless natural transactions and processes, which include cycles and other natural exchanges in and throughout the biosphere and geosphere. All these natural transactions and processes have an integrity that must not be violated, if life and existence are to continue.

The second dimension is that the concept refers to *the restless self-organizing dynamism*²³ of nature. There is a dynamism, which is essentially related to an endemic creativity in nature. It is restless and self-organizing. It is the source of changes and novelty, as well as the source of order. Thus, “integrity of creation” means “the dynamic, internally connected, and organized condition of creation.”²⁴

19. Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 99. This is quoted from Jay McDaniel, “Where is the Holy Spirit Anyway? Response to a Skeptical Environmentalist,” *Ecumenical Review* 42, no. 2 (April 1990): 165.

20. Charles Birch, “Christian Obligation for the Liberation of Nature,” in *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approach to Ecological Theology*, ed. Charles Birch, William Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 61.

21. Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics*, 99-107.

22. *Ibid.*, 99.

23. *Ibid.*, 100.

24. *Ibid.*, 101.

The third dimension is that the concept “integrity of creation” refers to earth’s resources as *a one-time endowment*.²⁵ Though the planet is self-renewing and immensely rich, it is also finite, limited and exhaustible. Its richness was there even long before humans came and once this richness becomes extinct no human power can bring it back. This richness can be exhausted when humans consume and destroy more than the earth can reproduce its resources, heal and renew. Once its resources are exhausted humans cannot produce them again. The earth’s resources are a one-time gift; and indeed once this gift is gone, it is gone forever.

The fourth dimension is that the concept means *the integral relation of social and environmental justice*.²⁶ Simply stated, justice for humans and for the rest of entities in the nonhuman world is knotted together. This means that in terms of way of thinking and frame of mind, “integrity of creation” is directly opposite to “apartheid thinking”. One cannot therefore profess love of his neighbor and at the same time destroying his neighbor’s natural environment; or one cannot truly say that he cares for creation or the natural environment without taking care of the sick and the poor people in his community. Social and environmental justice is integrally one. Therefore, our celebration of the Year of Social Concerns includes also awareness, discussions and practical actions in relation to environmental concerns as we are doing here today!

The fifth dimension is that the “integrity of creation” as a concept points to *a creator or divine source and a certain intrinsic dignity*²⁷ of all the entities in the natural world. This means that using the concept “integrity of creation” one affirms the faith that creation is God’s handiwork, which has its own inherent integrity as a whole as well as each entity in it. Everyone and everything in creation is ‘good’ in God’s sight. Creation possesses goodness and integrity by virtue of its origin in the Triune God’s will and love. Further, this means that each of this entity, which is the embodiment of goodness in and before God cannot be treated as a mere means or object of human

25. Ibid., 102.

26. Ibid., 103.

27. Ibid., 105.

The Eucharist and the Ecological Crisis

caprices and whims. Creation comes from God and has intrinsic dignity.

Finally, the sixth dimension is that the concept “integrity of creation” carries with it *the specific ethical freight of its religious content*.²⁸

As symbionts all entities depend on each other. For humans who are sentient beings this fact carries moral content – a moral imperative (or a sense of duty and obligation). It resists natural anthropocentrism. It says that humankind is morally responsible to nourish and support the well-being of the otherkind and of the whole of creation.

Looking at the scientific data concerning the critical ecological situation of interrelated environmental problems, and understanding the integral wholeness of creation, its processes and parts, through our discussion of the meaning “integrity of creation,” we can now indeed affirm the ecological law that says “everyone or everything is interconnected to everyone or everything else.” Here is the important aspect of communion in creation. Theologians would say, of course, that this communion flows from creation’s origin, which is the relational Triune God, whose three divine Persons are bonded in perfect union. Communion is a theological concept from which moral values can be culled upon. One is responsible for everyone or everything that one has communion with. In this sense, we proposed that cosmic communion should be an essential aspect of the moral imperative of caring and sustaining the integrity of creation. We call this the communion or *Fraternitas* aspect.

The Foundation of Intrinsic Value in Creatures

The six dimensions of the meaning of “integrity of creation,” just enumerated above, already embody the foundational reasons why humans are seen within nature and have obligations toward the natural world. These are: (1) the intrinsic or inherent value (good-in-itself, purpose, significance, order, freedom and etc.) that each entity and the whole natural world have; (2) the well-being of humanity (human welfare, future generations); (3) the sacred nature of each

28. Ibid., 106.

entity and the whole natural world as the handiwork of God (faith and moral living).²⁹

In other words, the bases for humankind having a duty and obligation toward otherkind and the whole of creation are: first, because the otherkind and creation as a whole have inherent value in themselves; second, for the well-being of humanity itself; and third, because the otherkind and creation as a whole are sacred as they originated from, being sustained by, and belong to God.

In Christian Faith these reasons are essentially interconnected as one: God created everything and has given each of the creatures and the whole of God's creation intrinsic value by pronouncing them "good"; made in the "image" of God, the human being, as the caretaker of God's creation, does not only protect, nourish and sustain his/her own well-being but also that of all creatures'; and finally, God, who originated every creature, has manifested God's being, goodness, beauty, wisdom, and holiness, in God's creation.³⁰ In other words, creatures participate in the Good who is God. This is the source of every creature's intrinsic value, which is further the foundation that mandates human duty and obligation towards each of God's creature and toward the whole of creation.

In close conjunction to the concept of communion, we propose another aspect of the moral imperative to care and sustain the integrity of creation: the aspect of distinction or integrity of the other. Following the Franciscan philosophical ideas of John Duns Scotus, we call this the otherness-distinction or *Haecceitas* aspect.

We will correlate this to the intrinsic value of each creature of God. We are saying that somehow every individual creature of God has a value in itself given by God. Respect for this intrinsic or inherent value of the individual entity is an important aspect of the moral imperative of caring and sustaining the integrity of creation.

29. Hans Jonas, a German philosopher more than half a century ago, has initially elaborated these foundational reasons in his books *The Imperative of Responsibility* and *The Phenomenon of Life*. His ideas are being discussed and words quoted in David Macauley, *Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), 167-185. See also, Tim Hayward, *Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, UK.: Polity Press, 1994), 162-172.

30. Karl H. Peschke, SVD, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II, Vol.* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2001), 755.

The Eucharist and the Ecological Crisis

A *caveat emptor* for all, until today there are some Catholic moral theologians³¹ who claim that the intrinsic value in things depends on human standard and interest – a very anthropocentric stance, as if it was a human being and not God who created each thing in the natural world and who pronounced each one “good”.

When ecocentricism or biocentricism is understood as the elimination of the ontological and axiological differences between the human and other beings, the Catholic Church’s Magisterium opposes it.³² However, it seems that what the Church’s Magisterium opposes is only the idea of ontological and axiological equality of all species and beings. Of course, there are differences and they are not equal in these aspects. The human being regarded as the “image of God” is more responsible than beings of otherkind in caring for the Earth and the things in it.

Yet human beings cannot develop their own distinct identity from among God’s creatures without relating to other beings in the world. The Catholic Church even posits, “The relationship of man (human being) with the world is a constitutive part of his human identity.”³³ What we are pointing out here is that though humans are distinct from other creatures, they cannot have their identity or humanness develop without being at the level of creatures in their relation to them. But furthermore, humans have also many levels of equality with creatures.

God gives the value for each of His creatures. In Jesus Christ, this value and the value of the whole creation is being revealed, affirmed and perfected.

31. Peschke’s stance is typical of these theologians. Karl H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology In The Light Of Vatican II* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc.), 755-756.

32. Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace, *Compendium Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church* (Manila: Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, 2004), 287, a quotation from John Paul II, Address to participants in a convention on “The Environment and Health” (24 March 1997), 5: *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 9 April 1997.

33. *Ibid.*, 280.

Christ is the Completion of Creation: Its Beginning, Center and End

In the Franciscan theological tradition, Christ in relation to Creation is seen as: (i) the Blueprint of Creation (John Duns Scotus), and (ii) the Beginning, Center and End of Creation (Bonaventure). Thus, (iii) Creation is essentially involved, affected and completed by Christ's Life and Mission.

The Blueprint of Creation

Christ, the Son of God, is the Blueprint of Creation. This means that Christ is the first in God's intention to love. This further means the primacy of Christ. St. John proclaimed; "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him" (John 1:1-3). Moreover St. Paul wrote; "For in Christ were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible...all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:15-16). In the plan of God before creation there was already this divine desire to be incarnated. For this incarnation to come about there has to be a creation and beings that are capable of understanding and freely responding to divine initiative. Therefore, creation was only a prelude to a much fuller manifestation of divine goodness and love, namely, the Incarnation. As a Blueprint or a Motif of creation, Christ is the perfect divine-creature communion. Christ exemplifies the meaning and purpose of creation, which is the glory of God in a communion of love.

Beginning, Center and End

Christ is the Beginning, Center and End of Creation. Christ the reason and goal of creation is indeed its beginning and end. The Johannine and Pauline traditions as quoted above can attest to this Faith. Since everything is created through, in and for Jesus Christ, Christians should see the meaning and purpose of creation in Him.

The Eucharist and the Ecological Crisis

We should see that the *creatio ex nihilo* at the beginning is through, in and for Christ; and because the Christian view of Creation is that it is not yet complete, the recapitulation of all things or the completion of creation at the ultimate end is through, in and for Christ. How about Christ during the process of *creatio continua* or at the center of the process of continuing creation? One should be able to see that this Jesus Christ that we are talking about in relation to creation is the same Jesus of Nazareth. It is in his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection that Christ saved us. Creation is united with the Creator in the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of Christ. His presence in the Eucharist is located also here. Jesus Christ is indeed the center of creation. Creation and Redemption are made into one – through, in, for - or centered in Christ.

Christ's Redemption Includes All

Christ's mission or Redemption includes the whole of creation, even the non-human creatures, as its objects. Creation or the natural world, with all creatures in it, is essentially involved in, affected and completed by the incarnation and redemption of Jesus Christ. Pope John Paul II wrote:

Christians believe that the Death and Resurrection of Christ accomplished the work of reconciling humanity to the Father, “who was pleased...through Christ to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:19-20). Creation was thus made new (Rev. 21:5). Once subjected to the bondage of sin and decay (Rom. 8:21), it has now received new life while “we wait for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pt. 3:13). Thus, the Father “has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery...which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, all things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:9-10).³⁴

34. Quoted from the 1990 Peace Message of Pope John Paul II and cited in Prisco A. Cajes, OFM, *Anitism & Perichoresis: Towards A Filipino Christian Eco-Theology Of Nature* (Quezon City: Our Lady Of The Angels Seminary, 2002), 139-140.

Jesus Christ entered into human history, participating in natural processes and redeeming not only the humankind but also all the otherkind and the whole of creation. Every part and the whole of creation is a recipient of the redemption that Christ has given. Hence, Christ is indeed the Savior of all! This shows and gives evidence to the value of all creatures!

The belief of cosmic Redemption brought about by Christ, which includes the deliverance from death, is rooted in the Scripture (Col. 1:14-20; 1 Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:10; Rom. 8:19-22) and the patristic tradition. This belief greatly affirms the value of creatures to God.³⁵

Furthermore and ultimately, Christ is the recapitulation of all creation as already pointed out. Hence, in the end everything is united with and completed in Christ. Therefore, Christ will be all in all. Christ affirmed and put into perfection the intrinsic value of each creature and of the whole Creation. He is the beginning, center and end of creation. He is its salvation and completion!

The Person of Jesus Christ, we believe, has two full natures, human and divine. The union of this is not a mixture of two natures in fact theologically it is a perfect communion. Below we will discuss some implications of this idea of perfect communion in relation to the Eucharist – especially in the concept of transubstantiation of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

THE EUCHARIST – BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Building from such a kind of creation-mindful Christology as discussed above, we can talk about the Eucharist. We can now relate Christ's words, actions, and person with the Eucharist and deepen this by relating it with the Ecological crisis.

At the Last Supper the Eucharist was instituted by Jesus when he took the bread, blest it and said, "*Take this, all of you and eat it. This is my body which will be given up for you?*" (cf. Mk. 14:22; Mt. 26:26; Lk. 22: 19; 1 Cor. 11; 24). Then Jesus took the cup of wine, blest it and said; "*Take this all of you and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood,*

35. James A. Nash, "Toward the Ecological Reformation of Christianity" in *Interpretation*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (January 1996), 9.

the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven" (cf. Mk. 14:24; Mt.26: 27-28; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11; 25). Finally he said; "*Do this in memory of me*" (Lk. 22:19). It is a fact that since the time of the Apostles until today the Church celebrates the Eucharist in memory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul has basically interpreted this memorial meal as communion. He wrote; "*The cup of blessing which we bless is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a communion of the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf*" (1 Cor. 10: 16-17).

The bread and the wine, in the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of the Eucharist, become the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ or the substantial presence of the Person of Jesus Christ, through the process called **transubstantiation**. Though the accidents of the bread and wine are retained, their substances have become the substance of Christ himself by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, furthering St. Paul's understanding of the Eucharist as communion of believers, we can point out that there is a real unity or communion as well between the material and creaturely elements of bread and wine with the divine Person of Jesus Christ – the communion between the Creator Logos and His creatures. This is the direction toward which Creation is moving – communion with God through, in and for Christ.

Humans with all of God's creatures await the new heaven and the new earth (cf. 2 Pt. 3: 13) when every creaturely being will be united with Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10). Since the Eucharist is the summit towards which all creation is moving forward - communion with God, the Eucharist is the response to the urgent concern of today's world, the global ecological crisis.³⁶

Vatican II goes further and elaborates the understanding of Eucharist as communion which is being brought about every time the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is celebrated on the Eucharistic altar in the Church (LG # 3).

36. "Instrumentum Laboris" (no. 3) of the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church. John D. Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 23-24.

The Bread and Wine

The significant meaning of the bread and wine as natural elements and actual representations should be retained and clearly shown when we present a theology of the Eucharist, which is ecologically-informed. I would like very much to follow up the point made by David N. Power when in his article “Eucharist” he wrote:

The significance of the bread and wine and of the common table in themselves is important to an understanding of the presence of Christ in these elements. They represent fundamental human needs and desires. They represent the work that is done to bring them to the table. They represent humanity’s communion with the whole of creation and with its cycles of production and reproduction. The breaking of the bread and sharing of a common cup are ritual actions brought into many a human situation to express both a necessary mutual dependency and a common hope. When the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, they lose none of this significance but carry it with them into the reality of communion in Christ, renewed in the life-giving and eschatological power of the Spirit... The reconciliation and the justice of God’s rule are embodied in the symbols that represent Christ and with and in Him a transformed humanity and a transformed creation.³⁷ (*The underlining is mine*).

The elements of bread and wine chosen by Jesus Christ in every celebration of the Eucharist bind the Eucharistic celebration to all creatures or all of Creation entrusted to the care of human beings (cf. Gen. 1:28). The bread that will become the Body of Christ is the fruit of a productive and unpolluted land. The wine to be changed into the Blood of Christ also signifies the transformation of Creation to meet the needs of the present and future generations. The water united with the wine symbolizing the union in Christ our human

37. David N. Power. “Eucharist” in Francis Schussler Fiorenza and John P. Calvin, eds. *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 282-283.

nature and Christ's divine nature signifies as well the satisfaction of our thirst for God and the "living water" (cf. Jn. 4: 14).³⁸

As the accidents - the colors, sizes or volumes, weights, being organic matters, natural appearances, and others - of the bread and wine are not lost so also their natural significance, even when we believe that they have been already transubstantiated through the power of the Holy Spirit and are the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This means that the bread and wine still represent in a clear manner the fundamental human need for food and the desire to be nourished and fed. The Eucharistic bread and wine still represent or are food for the hungry and drink for the thirsty. Can one community continue to use the bread and wine and celebrate the Eucharistic meal when thousands (even millions) of its members are dying of hunger? The Eucharist should be our communion with the hungry and needy. It should make us share not only our food but also our lives with those who need. And this is yet at the level of the natural significance of the elements of bread and wine. Then, put on the significance of the presence of Christ as the bread and wine – with Christ's dying to give the fullness of life, his commandment of love, or feeding the hungry, or giving one's life for one's friends; the more that the bread and wine signify food especially for the hungry!

Hunger in the world is not only caused by lack of food production due to laziness or to the effects of many natural calamities but most of all by un-ecological acts and injustices. In the document prepared by the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" entitled "World Hunger – A Challenge For All: Development In Solidarity", the Pontifical Council wrote:

The pretense of pretending to want to provide more food to more people and at the same time weaken agriculture cannot continue. Agriculture seems to be contributing more pollution (with wholesale use of fertilizer, pesticides and machines) as it reaches the industrial stage, before having developed the capacity to work without polluting. In addition to the other elements necessary in life, the atmosphere, water, soil and the woodlands are all threatened by pollution, over-consumption, man-made desertification and deforestation. In the space of fifty years,

38. Ibid, "Instrumentum Laboris" (no. 3) ...

half the tropical forests have been cleared, more often than not in the quest for more land or because of short-term policies to intensify farming in order to offset the debt burden. In poorest regions, desertification is being caused by survival practices that actually are increasing poverty. These include over-grazing as well as felling trees and shrubs for cooking and heating (No. 30).³⁹

The Eucharistic bread and wine retaining its natural reality represent the work of human hands combined with the natural or ecological cycles – like food cycle, water cycle, etc. They represent the human efforts or works and interdependence with other creatures in their ecosystems. They represent the humans’ interrelationship with other creatures and their communion with them.

This understanding of human communion with the other beings is deepened in its reality and significance with the fact that the bread and wine is the Body and Blood of Christ; they are Christ Himself. It becomes the cosmic communion with the divine (Cosmotheandric Communion of Pannikar).

The process of transubstantiation that is effected by the Holy Spirit in the *anaphora* or more precisely at the *epiclesis*, brings the creaturely elements of the bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This would be like the idea of Christification of Teilhard de Chardin.

The Holy Spirit, who in the beginning created everything through God’s Word, is what Teilhard de Chardin identifies as the “Fire”, the power or creative energy that creates, illumines, transforms and causes the communion of all things in Christ.⁴⁰

The Sacramental Symbolic-Presence and the Real Physical-Presence of Christ

The real or substantial presence of Christ as the Eucharistic bread and wine is difficult to explain. We may start by looking at the two views of valuing the presence of Christ in the sacraments: the sacramental symbolic-presence view and the real physical-presence

39. Pontifical Council “Cor Unum”. *World Hunger – A Challenge for All: Development in Solidarity* (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 1997), 59.

40. Teilhard De Chardin, *The Heart Of Matter* (A Harvest Book: New York, 1980), 121-124.

view. Both can be applied to the Eucharist. The real physical-presence view goes beyond the framework of signs and symbols. It is of another category, which is in the extra-sacramental realm. The substantial presence of Jesus Christ in the Bread and Wine is in the real physical-presence category. However, there is a real problem here because most of the theologies of the sacrament and even in the understanding of many people the presence of Christ is at the level of symbols and signs – the sacramental symbolic-presence view.

Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation until today cannot be understood especially by the ordinary lay people. It cannot be clearly explained in the catechetical programs and courses in parishes and schools. The lack or inadequate understanding of the Eucharist, in general, leads to receiving the Eucharistic Bread or the Body of Christ with less meaning and value or not receiving it at all and leaving the Eucharistic celebration without finishing it. In the Philippines, it seems that the lack of understanding on the real change of the Bread into the Body of Christ leads to incorrectly attributing this change to the superstitious and magical power of the priests.

Transubstantiation as a philosophical term is derived from the root concept of substance. Substance, most usually, is often used only in relation to humans and spiritual beings not so much on things like bread and wine in the Eucharist. So, there are those who object regarding transubstantiation as a concept to explain the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. This objection really does not invalidate or nullify the idea that Christ's presence is real in the Eucharistic Bread and Wine. The late Karl Rahner argued that transubstantiation was used only to logically present an explanation of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.⁴¹ We are saying that the use of the concept of transubstantiation has problems philosophically, though these problems do not really deny the faith of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

41. Karl Rahner, "Die Gegenwart Christi im Sakrament des Herrenmahles," *Schriften zur Theologie, IV*, 357-385.

St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*, questions nos. 75-76, insisted that Christ's real body is present in the Eucharist; most precisely the substance of the transformed bread and wine is the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ. What did St. Thomas mean by substance? Substance means identity of a thing in the simplest way of explaining it. Every individual thing is itself, it has an identity. What St. Thomas would call substance, we would call identity.

We have to strengthen the faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and we should point out that in Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (no. 9), that Christ is really present (a) "*in a body of the faithful gathered*", (b) "*in his Word*", (c) "*in the person of the minister*", and above all (d) "*under the species of the Eucharist (Bread and Wine)*."

What is the meaning and effect of this real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? For some, they follow Teilhard de Chardin who thought that the effect is Christification, which means that is not only the mere sanctification of humanity and the whole creation; it is most importantly a Christification or the recapitulation, as St. Irenaeus would term it, of all creation in Christ. In the Eucharist the actualization of a perfect communion between creatures and their Creator through, in and with Christ initiates this recapitulation.

Ontologically it is not pantheism or monism! It is perfect communion akin to the perfect communion of the two natures of Jesus Christ in the mystery of Incarnation. This is why the Eucharist can be seen as the perpetuation of Incarnation. It is the perfect communion of the Creator and the created (bread and wine), the reason why the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Ontologically then, this mystery of perfect communion is not pantheism but Teilhard de Chardin's Christian panentheism, which we will elaborate below!

This meaning and these effects of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist to humanity and creation should be understood and greatly accomplished or realized. The implications of this in relation to looking for an effective response against the ecological crisis should be recognized and explored.

We must say that philosophical terms are really inadequate to explain what occurs in the mystery of turning the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Even the specific term of *transubstantiation* is inadequate. When the *epiclesis* is affected, the substance

of the bread and wine (creatures) becomes that of the divine (Jesus Christ). Is there only one substance at the end, the divine? What remains of the bread and wine are accidents – shape, color, taste, etc. Yes. Could this not be called divinization or *theosis*?

Christian Panentheism

Perfect communion can be explained as the philosophical concept of Christian panentheism. This can avoid the danger of pantheism. Christian panentheism is different from other concepts of ontological panentheism, which often is pantheism in disguise. The entity of the Creator can never be the same with that of the created or vice versa. In Christian panentheism the ontological entity of a creature, which is distinct from that of the Creator, is within the reality of the divine Creator – a perfect communion. In perfect communion with each other, the creature (bread and wine) is subsumed and it is changed into the reality of the divine (Jesus Christ). Thus, this perfect communion between the divine and the creature “transubstantiates” the latter into the former.

Perfect communion is what John D. Zizioulas, a brilliant Orthodox theologian, in his book *Communion & Otherness*, elaborates by explaining Maximus the Confessor’s ontology of the *logos* or the fixed aspects of the being and the ontology of the *tropos* or adjustable aspects of the being. Perfect communion is somewhat similar to the concept of ‘hypostatic union’. Zizioulas writes:

Bridging the gulf of otherness between God and the world through ‘hypostatic union’, that is *through a Person* (the Son of the Trinity), and not through nature, requires, philosophically speaking, an ontology which is conceived not on the basis of *what* things are (their nature), but of *how* they are (their ‘way of being’, or *hypostasis*). Maximus uses for that purpose a distinction between *logos* and *tropos*: in every being there is a permanent and unchangeable aspect and an adjustable one. In other words, the *logos physeos* remains fixed, but the *tropos* adjusts being to an intention or purpose or manner of communion. In other words, the love of God bridges the gulf of otherness by affecting the changeable and adjustable aspect of being, and

this applies equally to God and to the world: God bridges the gulf by adjusting His own *tropos*, that is, *how* He is, while created existence also undergoes adjustments not of its *logos physeos* but of its *tropos*.⁴²

The resultant of this perfect communion is a higher and different ‘tropic identity’ as Zizioulas calls it. Here, again, are the aspects of communion and distinction, or in the Franciscan terminology, *fraternitas* and *haecceitas*.

Does this sound like the idea of consubstantiation that at first both John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham saw philosophically as the best concept that could describe what happened to the bread and wine in the Eucharist, though ultimately both of them followed the Church’s explanation of transubstantiation?⁴³ Not really.

In other words, here, we are pointing out that the concept of perfect communion includes the idea that the substance of the created is embraced into perfect communion by the reality of the divine so that it is transformed into it. We can further relate this to St. Irenaeus’ concept of recapitulation.

St. Irenaeus’ concept of recapitulation (*anakephalaiosis*) was taken from the letters of St. Paul, which means that all creation and all the works of salvation are gathered up, renewed, restored and reordered by the Father through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. All commune with God in Christ Jesus. This is clearly elaborated by St. Irenaeus in his work *Against Heresies* (especially, no. 3.8).

Consubstantiation is not what we believe as a Church; rather, we believe that the substance of the bread and wine is transubstantiated to that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our dogma states “*Christ becomes present in the Sacrament of the Altar by the transformation of the whole substance of the bread into His Body and the whole substance of the wine into His Blood.*”⁴⁴

42. John D. Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 23-24.

43. Frank O’Loughlin, *Christ Present in the Eucharist* (Makati: St. Pauls Philippines, 2000), 37.

44. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Patrick Lynch (Rockford: Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1974), 379.

Our point in putting forward the concept of Christian panentheism here is that, though it is more in line with the idea of communion, transubstantiation is more than just a simple communion. It is a perfect communion that recapitulates! This means that perfect communion affirms the individual creaturely substance by recapitulating it into the most perfect state; and this is what happened to the ordinary bread and wine transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is perfect communion and it is recapitulation in Christ.

Asian Religious Perspective

Then, how do we look at the Eucharist in the light of the Ecological Crisis and the discussion above? We propose that we stress the celebration of the Eucharist as a highest liturgy that unites all creation and the divine Creator. The communion between God and creation should be explained and demonstrated. This means that the celebration of the Eucharist should include or extend to the living out of this communion on the level of day-to-day life of a Christian.

In the Asian or Eastern perspective of interreligious dialogue,⁴⁵ we should be sensitive to other religions – the way of life and the hope for the earth that they have. In Buddhism, for example, the teaching and experience of *nirvana* is profound and is very important. *Nirvana* is the end of all *dukkha*: of all that is suffering, unsatisfactory, limited, and imperfect. Thus, *nirvana* is not so much to be talked about rather than experienced. There are ways of how to attain it. Moreover, there is a teaching of *Buddha* that each of us is a relationship. Therefore, we are a big network of interrelationships and we do not just exist but exist with. To be is to inter-be. The whole of creation therefore is Inter-Being. This is a grand communion of beings. In Hinduism, we should be sensitive to the understanding or faith in the gods, for instance, *Brahma* the creator and lord of all creation; *Visnu* the preserver and sustainer of the world; and, *Siva* who holds together the opposites and is portrayed as destroyer of

45. Edgar G. Javier, SVD, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today* (Quezon City: Claretian Publication, 2006), 43-69.

evil, union of femininity and masculinity, preserver of the good, and has dual nature of serenity and dynamism. It is in Hinduism that the presence of the divine can be seen in all beings. When one unites oneself with *Atman* (the universal Self) and in this way unites oneself with the whole universe. Again the idea and experience of communion is essential. In Islam submission to the will of *Allah*, the creator God who is the Merciful One is the main teaching. Creation belongs to God alone. Moreover, this God is found in creation. Thus, everyone who believes and is obedient to *Allah* is responsible for the shape of things in creation including the care of one's brothers and sisters. In Confucianism, the Chinese stress the sacredness of life and harmony in nature and this is strongly taught. The life force called *Ch'i* is in everything that exists. This force harmonizes even the opposites, which are seen as complementary forces called *yin* and *yang*. Again, here communion or harmony is being stressed. All these are brought out here in order to make the point that in the Asian or Eastern perspective the idea of working for the communion between creation including human beings and God is easy to understand and is readily acceptable. It is present in all of the major religions. This means, also, that the teaching of what we believe in the Eucharist, the communion between creation and Creator, most specifically in the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, can as well be understood and accepted in the Asian or Eastern perspective.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of perfect communion because all the dimensions of communion are found in this sacrament. God reveals and communicates Godself to humans. Humans enter into communion with God. Those who participate in the Eucharist enter into communion with one another. Finally, through the human beings, creation as a whole enters into communion with God.⁴⁶

Eucharist: The Sanctification and Protection of Creation

As understood by the Church's theologians the effects of the Eucharist are an intrinsic union of the recipient with Christ and the preservation and increase of the supernatural life of the recipient's

46. Ibid, *Communion & Otherness...*, 7.

soul. Thus the Council of Trent stated that the Eucharist is a pledge of heavenly bliss and of the future resurrection of the body. This theological teaching focuses more on the human participant-recipients of the Eucharist. It is silent with regard to the effect that pertains to the non-human creatures or to the whole of creation.

A break of this silence is found in the recent Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist of Pope Benedict XVI entitled *Sacramentum Caritatis*, the Pope writes:

Finally, to develop a profound Eucharistic spirituality that is also capable of significantly affecting the fabric of society, the Christian people, in giving thanks to God through the Eucharist, should be conscious that they do so in the name of all creation, aspiring to the sanctification of the world and working intensely to that end. The Eucharist itself powerfully illuminates human history and the whole cosmos [no. 92].

The Pope clearly saw the essential connection and relevance of the Eucharist to human history and the natural world. So, the Holy Father encouraged the faithful to develop a Eucharistic spirituality that is sensitive to and that works for the sanctification of human history and the cosmos. Further, the Pope saw the fundamental connection between the Eucharist and the protection of the environment. He wrote:

The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit. Rather, it is part of God's plan, in which all of us are called to be sons and daughters in the one Son of God, Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:4-12). The justified concern about threats to the environment present in so many parts of the world is reinforced by Christian hope, which commits us to working responsibly for the protection of creation. The relationship between the Eucharist and the cosmos helps us to see the unity of God's plan and to grasp the profound relationship between creation and the "new creation" inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ, the new Adam. Even now we take in that new creation by virtue of our Baptism (cf. Col 2:12ff). Our Christian life, nourished by the Eucharist, gives us a glimpse of the new world – new heavens and a new earth – where the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven,

from God, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”
(Rev 21:2) [no. 92].

The Holy Father seeing the Eucharist in connection to the protection of environment argued that there should be a commitment from us, Christians, to the protection of the environment if we have this deep Eucharistic spirituality.

There is the opening to a possible rereading and broadening of the understanding of the Eucharist.

EXPANSION AND PROPOSED UNDERSTANDING OF THE EUCHARIST

Below are the two proposals that this paper puts forward in relation to rereading the meaning of the Eucharist.

Correlation with the Current Scientific Understanding

In terms of elaborating the understanding of the Eucharist this paper proposes that the philosophical and metaphysical term transubstantiation should be correlated if not really explained in current scientific terms – like the three essential entities of matter, energy and information.

In the 19th century scientists concluded that there were two essential entities in our physical reality: matter and energy. However today, in the 21st century scientists agree that there are three essential entities in our reality: matter, energy and information. We realize that in every gene of every cell in every creature there is the DNA that contains genetic information defining the identity of that creature. This genetic information contains instruction and intelligent design, which is constantly being processed – transcribed, replicated and transmitted in order to build and to give identity to creatures. Indeed information is the third essential entity in the physical reality.

It is possible to correlate this essential entity of information with the Christian ideas of the logos (reason, intelligibility, knowability) of things and the Logos (Wisdom) of God which is Christ, especially according to the Gospel of John. Can we use this to translate the

meaning of transubstantiation that occurs to the species of bread and wine, by saying that through the power of the Holy Spirit of God the logos in these species is changed, perfected and recapitulated into the Logos of God who is Jesus Christ?

Recapitulation of Creation

Understanding the Eucharist as the continuing Incarnation, especially at the moment when the bread and wine are transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ, we propose to see and regard the Eucharist as an initial recapitulation of creation in Jesus Christ. If the Eucharist is so, therefore it has a very important and essential role in the prevention and solution of today's ecological crisis. It is more than just sanctification of the natural world; it heals the cosmos and makes it an integral whole, or initially it makes creation complete and recapitulates it in Christ.

With this we specifically propose to reread the meaning and extend the understanding of the effects of the Eucharist not only focusing on the human participant-recipients of the Body and Blood of Christ that includes the presider-priest of the Eucharistic celebration, and to the whole Church, but also to the whole of creation as represented by the species of bread and wine. The effects of the Eucharist to creation as such are not only sanctification but also the initial perfection of its communion with God, which can be taken as the beginning of its recapitulation in Christ.

The Eucharist, therefore, shall be consciously celebrated not only as a proclamation but most importantly, it shall be effectively actualized and its values lived out. Communion with Jesus Christ shall lead to the sanctification of all creation. This means that ultimately Christ shall be all in all or the recapitulation of everything in Christ has begun and is ongoing in every celebration of the Eucharist. Through the Eucharist, the completion of creation in Jesus Christ has already initially arrived. Hence, the Eucharist should be celebrated in the most profound way and that the celebration should not only end in the church but should be extended and carried over to the day-to-day living of our moral lives as Christians.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS: EUCHARIST AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

In conclusion, let us summarize everything that we said and give some recommendations. In this paper we brought out the global ecological crisis by discussing the many components of the crisis. We also showed that, particularly in Samar Island in the Philippines, this crisis is being felt though in a different degree.

We stressed that humans have responsibilities in responding to this urgent crisis by putting forward the important understanding of the concept integrity of creation, stressing our moral imperative in protecting and sustaining it. We argued on the importance of the communion (*Fraternitas*) aspect of this integrity of creation and the distinction-otherness (*Haecceitas*) aspect.

Finally, we proposed to see a more ecologically-informed Christology and theology of the Eucharist focusing more on the transubstantiation as the perfect communion between creation and Creator, or the recapitulation of all creation in God, realized in the Eucharistic Bread and Wine as the Body and Blood of Christ.

In the Asian context, we argued that communion of creatures and Creator is not an alien concept. In fact, harmony and communion are present as hope in the major religions in our continent. Therefore, the concept of transubstantiation seen within the bigger concept of perfect communion can easily be understood by Asians.

Here, we are emphasizing the importance of the Eucharistic celebration. We argue strongly that each Eucharistic celebration should extend beyond the liturgical rite in the church, and into the homes and workplaces of the faithful by living out the meaning, values and effects of the Eucharist. In doing this, we urge every Catholic to effect the transformation of humanity, and the beginning of the completion of creation as a whole, which is initiated in the Eucharist where the perfect communion between creation and the Creator occurs. Thus, the recapitulation of all things in Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist, as the continuing Incarnation, has begun and is ongoing.

Proposing these and believing that the Eucharist, more specifically during the *epiclesis* when the bread and wine are transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ, is the initial beginning of the recapitulation and completion of creation in Christ, we put forward the following recommendations:

- 1. The Celebration of the Eucharist.** The Eucharist should be celebrated more profoundly by showing clearly not only the effect of sanctification of humanity but most importantly the recapitulation of creation, in Christ. As a liturgy the symbolisms, signs, actions, etc. and the Word of God should be clearly explained.

To strengthen the idea of perfect communion between God and creation, we must necessarily stress the ecclesial communion of all believers in the celebration of the Eucharist. We must not fall again to the weakness of the past theologies in stressing only the presence of Christ in the species of the Bread and Wine. We must also highlight the importance of the presence of Christ in God's Word and in the celebrating community with its ministers.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is a central part of the celebration. The Offertory and Eucharistic Prayers, and what happens during *Epiclesis* when the transubstantiation occurs, should be clearly explained and elaborated to the faithful. The importance of gifts and the offerings should be made clear, too. Most significantly, the effects of the Eucharist - sanctification, perfect communion or recapitulation - should be explained as well to the people.

Since it is a celebration of the most important sacrament of all, the participants should know that they should bring this Eucharistic celebration to their homes and workplaces or carry the effects of the Eucharist in their day-to-day life.

- 2. Human Beings as Priests for Creation.** Priests are offerers of creation to God. They do not only offer gifts and

sacrifices to God but also see to it that these offerings are pure, good and wholesome – worthy of God. In other words, humans as priests are caretakers of the materials for sacrifice – creatures of God. This is one very important aspect in the common priesthood of all the baptized.

Christian anthropology should highlight this unique function of human beings in relation to creation – a function that no other creaturely species can perform.

- 3. Moral Living.** This should be the living out part of our celebration of the Eucharist. Personal as well as communal acts of ecological degradation are incompatible for those who join the celebration of the Eucharist and receive the Body and Blood of Christ. For example, priests who preside the Eucharist should not smoke or not take illegal drugs. St. Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of Ecology, reminds brother priests as he writes in his *Letter to the Entire Order*; “I beg in the Lord all my brothers who are priests, or who will be, or who wish to be priests of the Most High that whenever they wish to celebrate Mass, being pure, they offer the true Sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with purity and reverence.”⁴⁷ Being pure or purity, here, should not be spiritualized. Purity here should also mean wholeness, which includes the physiological and psychological integrity of the person.

The integrity of creation should be protected and the intrinsic value of every creature should be respected. Persons who committed an act of a grievous ecological destruction should be excommunicated and therefore not allowed to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist until they are absolved by their church leaders or local ordinaries.

47. Regis J. Armstrong, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings for a Gospel Life* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), 216-217.

4. **Ecology Desk.** Parishes and Dioceses should establish a working Ecology Desk for Environmental Advocacy and implementations of other ecological programs. This allows the participants to concretely actualize their continued celebration of the Eucharist even after the liturgical celebration in the church.

5. **Other Ecological Activities.** Ongoing awareness drive should be made before and after the celebration of the Eucharist. Ecological catechesis, environmental protection and communing with nature activities should be regularly scheduled in every parish and diocese, especially like the Earth Day Celebration, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, etc.

There are still many ways of responding to the urgent ecological crisis of our time. The Eucharist emphasizes the point that our ultimate goal is creation's recapitulation with, through and in Christ when we and all creation will be in perfect communion with the Triune God. Today, in every Eucharist Christ begins to actualize with us this recapitulation and communion. Thus, as we live out the Eucharist in our moral lives we participate in this new beginning.

Prisco A. Cajés, OFM
St. Alphonsus Theological and Mission Institute
(SAT-MI), Davao City
Institute of the Consecrated Life-Asia (ICLA)
Quezon City
email address: priscajés@yahoo.com