The Eucharist or the Lord's Supper in the light of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue (1972-2015)

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue highlighted a certain disproportion in the approach of each of the parties to the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. For Pentecost Christians participation in the Lord's Supper is of secondary importance. Common conversations been shown that in Catholic spirituality the Eucharist occupies a significant and central place. It is the presence of the sacrifice that took place once and for all on the cross of Christ. Pentecostals are not unanimous, however, in the meaning of the Lord's Supper. For this community usually the Lord's Supper means only commemoration of Last Supper. They do not believe, however, that during it the bread and wine will transform truly, really, and substantially into the Body and Blood of Christ, which is the fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church. The presence of the Savior during this rite, according to the Pentecostals, is only spiritual. Although Pentecostal Christians do not attach so much importance to the Eucharist, as Catholics do, nevertheless for the followers of both communities this celebration is an important spiritual experience. This article aims to show similarities and differences in relation to the above issues in the light of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue.

Keywords: The Pentecostal Movement, Pentecostal churches, Catholic Church, Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper
1. INTRODUCTION

The Pentecostal Movement have the most dynamic development among other Christian communities in the world. It especially progressed in the USA and in Africa, South Korea, Argentina and Brazil, as well as in Europe. Some researchers say this is the most significant and largest Christian movement of the twentieth century [1]. Some followers of the Pentecost Movement remain members of their denominations, contributing charismatic group. An example of such a group in the Catholic Church is the Renewal in the Holy Spirit. The others join to the Pentecostal denominations, like the Assemblies of God in the USA [2]. The information provided by D. Barrett and T. M. Johnson indicates that over the course of one century, the number of followers of this movement increased about 141 times (Figure 1) [3].

Some Pentecostal churches have been in dialogue with the Catholic Church since 1972. In its history, six phases can be enumerating, the last of which ended in 2015 [4]. In view of this circumstances, it is reasonable to develop the ongoing theological discourse between the Catholic and Pentecostal traditions. All the more so as the previous arrangements showed to many common points in the doctrine of the said Churches.

This article aims to bring the teaching about the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper and to show similarities and differences in it. The basis for this article has become the Final Reports of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue.

They are available in the journal "Information Service" published by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and on the official website Roman Curia (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_pentecostals.htm). This article uses the following form of indication for concrete
documents from the dialogue. The shortcut "FR" used means the term Final Report. After that, a specific document number is indicated, for example I, II, III and so on. The point number used in the document is indicated in the numeral. The indication "FR V, no. 1" means that the text refers to the first point of the fifth phase of the dialogue. In addition, documents of the Church's Magisterium, official church positions and other religious publications, both Pentecostal and Catholic, were used.

Indications to precise number point of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are marked with the shortcut "CCC, no. ...", canons of the Code of Canon Law of 1983 with the shortcut "CCN, can ...". This form of the editorial will make it possible to keep the content transparent. Additionally, the considerations made in this article have been confronted with other articles published in international journals, they are indicated in references.

2. DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES, THERE IS A COMMON POINT

The final report of the fifth phase of Catholic-Pentecostal talks (1998-2006) draws attention to certain elements that differ the dialogue partners. While in Catholic cults a greater accent is placed on liturgical rites, Pentecostal Christians emphasize more the charismatic dimension of the congregation (FR V, no. 189). The third phase dialogue (1985-1989) showed a certain disproportion in the approach of each of the parties to the Eucharist - the Lord's Supper. It has been shown that in Catholic spirituality it occupies a significant and central place (FR III, no. 98). On the other hand, for Pentecost Christians, participation in the Lord's Supper is of secondary importance (FR III, no. 96).

![Ecumenism symbol](Picture 1. Ecumenism symbol.)
Interlocutors of the second phase of the talks (1977-1982) noticed that they differ in this issue. These differences are rooted mainly in the doctrines of individual Churches (FR II, no. 45). Despite this, respondents jointly acknowledged that pastoral work in each both communities fundamentally affects to the faith experience of the faithful through the call to reflection, formation and discipleship (FR V, no. 189).

They also emphasized that it is God who leads each of the communities in the "wide range of spiritual experiences, extraordinary and ordinary, joyous and sad, and those which make us aware of our spiritual riches or poverty [...] to perfection [...] until the day of Christ Jesus" (FR V, no. 190). This approach of both communities is a great value in efforts to restore Christian unity – ecumenism (Picture 1).

3. CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE EUCHARIST

The final report of the second phase of talks (1977-1982) summarizes the Catholic understanding of the sacrament in a concise way: "Catholics regard the Eucharist as a sacramental memorial of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary in the Biblical sense of the word anamnesis. By God's power, in the Eucharistic celebration Jesus is present in His death and resurrection. This sacred rite is for Roman Catholics a privileged means of grace and the central act of worship. It is celebrated frequently, even daily" (FR II, no. 45) [5].

3.1. Eucharistic memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross

Term of anamnesis (Greek - commemoration, memory) used in this formula means that the Eucharist makes the sacrifice present and prolongs its saving action by including the sacrifice of the Church in it. Therefore, it is not only a memento in the ordinary sense of this word, nor is it a repetition of the sacrifice that once happened on Golgotha and neither must be repeated. The Eucharist makes present the sacrifice of Christ (CCC, no 1330). Thanks to this, the sacrifice offered on the Cross prolongs the sacrifice of the Mass – extending its effectiveness over time. It appends the faithful into the reach of Christ's sacrifice (CCC, no. 1385).

Catholics believe that in the Eucharist is truly, really, and substantially contained the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is present, together with his soul and deity. Therefore, in the Eucharist is present all Christ. This is possible due to the transubstantiation (Latin - transsubstantiatio) of the substance of bread in His Body and the substance of wine in His Blood, leaving only the form of bread and wine (CCC, no. 1374). The Catechism of the Catholic Church quoting the arrangements of the Council of Trent, which sanctioned this doctrine, explains: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation" (CCC, no. 1376) [6, 7]. The Catechism further explains that in the form of bread and wine is the whole of Christ, and that in every particle of its after its division is present all Christ (CCC, no. 1377). For the celebration of this sacrament, unleavened bread made of wheat flour, mixed with a sufficient amount of natural water and grape wine, to which a little water is added, is used (CCN, can. 924.926). The use of other, forbidden matter during the Eucharist makes it invalid (Picture 2).
3. 2. Nomenclature of the Eucharist

Because of the wealth of spiritual content that the Eucharist brings, it is defined by many terms. The Catechism contains ten terms: the Eucharist (CCC, no. 1328), the Lord's Supper, the Breaking of Bread, The Eucharistic assembly (CCC, no. 1329), the memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection, the Holy Sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy (CCC, no. 1330), Holy Communion (CCC, no. 1331), Holy Mass (CCC, no. 1332), sacrifice of praise (CCC, no. 2643). Of all the seven sacraments mentioned by the Catholic Church, the Code of Canon Law calls the Eucharist the "the most August sacrament" (CCL, can. 897) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend" (CCC, no. 1374). The Eucharistic sacrifice in the Catholic doctrine is the summit and source of all cult and Christian life. The other sacraments and all the works of the Church have relationship with it and are directed towards this (CCL, can. 897) [8].

3. 3. Participation in the Eucharist as a sign of full belonging to the Church and connection with Christ

The Catholic dialogue partners emphasize that participation in the Eucharist is a sign of full integration with the Church community (FR V, no. 70). According to Catholic teaching, the receiving by the faithful Holy Communion deepens his union with Christ. It also takes away
the venial sin which he committed and protects from committing mortal sins. Consequently, causes the strengthening of the bonds of love between the faithful who receive the Blessed Sacrament and Jesus Christ. The reception of the Eucharist strengthens also the unity of the whole Church – the Mystical Body of Christ (CCC, no. 1416) [9].

**Picture 3.** The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic Church.

During the common interconfessional talks, the Pentecostal interlocutors pointed out that some of the members of the Catholic Church perceive the sacraments in a ‘mechanical’ or even ‘magical’ way. Catholic respondents have shown, however, that Catholic teaching says that the sacraments are not ‘magical’ because they require spiritual openness and faith from the recipient. The grace associated with the reception of the sacraments is not granted automatically nor unconditionally – a right internal disposition of the recipient is required. When it is missing, the received sacrament may be fruitless. It was emphasized, however, that ultimately the efficacy of the sacraments depends on the grace of God (FR III, no. 86).

The final report of the fifth phase of the Catholic-Pentecostal conversations mentions of the exposition the Blessed Sacrament (FR V, no. 191). It is true that this issue occurs in the context of a practice incomprehensible to the Pentecostals interlocutors, but it is worth mentioning this form of Catholic worship related to the Eucharist. The Catholic Church has always shown the highest worship – cultus latriae – for the Sacrament of the Eucharist, not only during the Mass, but also beyond that. It includes the careful storage of consecrated hosts, their public adoration and exposition in the Eucharistic processions.
For Catholics, the adoration of the Eucharist – In connection with faith in the permanent presence of Christ under the holy figures – means finding themselves in the extraordinary closeness with your Savior, which is a source of strength, comfort and support (Picture 3).

4. PENTECOSTAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

In the aforementioned final report of the second phase of talks, a Pentecostal view of the Lord's Supper was also recorded: "Among Pentecostals, the Lord's Supper does not hold an equally predominant place in their life of worship. Most Pentecostals celebrate the Lord's Supper as an ordinance in obedience to the command of the Lord. Other Pentecostal churches believe this memorial to be more than a reminder of Jesus' death and resurrection, considering it a means of grace" (FR II, no. 45).

The more detailed description, however, contains the final report of the fifth phase of talks: "Pentecostals do see in the Last Supper and the 'breaking of bread' (Acts 2:42) Jesus' institution of an ongoing rite and communal celebration that, in the fullest sense of the Greek work anamnesis, 'remembers' him and his death on the Cross and even an ordained means for God's communication of redemptive life, as reflected in the practice in many Pentecostal churches of praying for the sick during the celebration of the Lord's supper. But they do not see these accounts as necessarily implying the more fully developed sacramental, eucharistic theology embraced by Catholics" (FR V, no. 70) (Picture 4).

4. 1. Two ways of Pentecostal interpretation of the Lord's Supper

According to the above definitions included in the final reports, in Pentecostal interpretation of the Lord's Supper are for two ways. The first meaning is similar to the Zwinglian interpretation, the second way is similar to the Calvinist interpretation (Figure 2) [10, 11].

![Diagram](Two views for the Lord's Supper)

*Figure 2. Pentecostal understanding the Lord's Supper*
In the first sense, it is only a memory of an event in the New Testament – the Last Supper which Jesus Christ celebrated with his apostles (Picture 4) – repeated as a sign of Christianity. This understanding of the Lord's Supper is a manifestation of belonging to the group of Christ's disciples and is the fulfillment of His command – "this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19 KJV).

![Picture 4. A stained-glass window depicting the Last Supper.](image)

According to the second view – similar to the Calvinist interpretation – the Lord’s Supper is symbolic, spiritual communion with Jesus Christ [12]. It is the source of God's blessing and God's grace. Therefore, so some Pentecostal congregations, during this rite, they especially pray for the sick and the needy.

The Lord's Supper is a participation through faith in the only salvific sacrifice of Jesus Christ laid on the cross. Pentecostals believe that this rite itself is not Christ's sacrifice, nor is there any other sacrifice in it except the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Heb 13:15). Although the elements of bread and wine refer to Jesus in such a way that they can be called His Body and His Blood, in their essence and nature they not cease to be real bread and wine. For this reason, eating them during the Lord's Supper must necessarily be connected with faith.
4. 2. Celebration

The Lord's Supper is celebrating with varying frequency – depending on the accepted practice of the specific community – every Sunday, or once a month, once a quarter, or once a year. It is emphasized that the higher frequency of celebrating this rite does not direct to become ordinary its celebrating, but it is a source of greater blessing. There is no uniform form for the service of the Lord's Supper. There are not also official books or liturgical texts prepared for it. This is caused by fear of become it to only external fulfilment of liturgical norms, with the lack of an appropriate internal attitude of the faithful. In some congregations, it is practiced saying words from the Last Supper and prayer over both its elements – first over bread, then over wine. In other communities this is done separately. Participants in this act either are in a standing position or stand up only to receive the elements of the Supper.

The bread used during the celebration can be both unleavened – In remembrance of the matzah consumed during the Last Supper, and leavened – as a memory of Christ, who became a 'new leaven'. The wine should be grape, but in justified cases it is allowed to use grape juice (Picture 5). At the end of the rite, these elements should be treated with respect. Pentecostals generally disallow faith in the permanent presence of Jesus in bread and wine, as well as adoration and Eucharistic worship [13]. Few Pentecostal communities jointly with the Lord's Supper practice the washing of legs as an integral part of this ceremony.

![Picture 5](image-url) - The celebration of Lord`s Supper.

4. 3. The meaning of the Lord's supper

Generally, in the Pentecostal teaching of the Lord's Supper, it has four meanings. It is a 'remembrance' – that what Jesus did on the cross remains in the memory of the faithful;
'confession' – those taking part in this rite confess Christ as their Lord and Savior; 'participation or fellowship with Christ' – because Christ during this celebration is present in a spiritual way; and 'covenant' – the receivers Lord`s Supper celebrate that they are in a covenant relationship with Christ and in the covenant relationship with each other. The participating in the Lord's Supper is a mention the death of Jesus for the sins of the world. This remembrance is not an ordinary reminder of historical facts, but a participation in spiritual reality [14].

4. Nomenclature of the Lord`s Supper

Among the supporters of the Pentecostal movement is being used other terms of the Lord's Supper. They are taken from biblical texts and have their source in doctrine. The most commonly used are the following: 'the Breaking Bread' (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; Acts 2:42.46; 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16.17ab; 11:23.26-28), 'the Lord's Table' (1 Cor 10:21), 'Chalice and bread' (1 Cor 10:16.17.21; 11:25-28), 'the Holy Communion' (1 Cor 10:17.21.30; 1 Cor 10:16.18.20) and 'the Eucharist' (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22n; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24).

5. UNIQUE APPROACH OF RANDY CLARK TO THE LORD'S SUPPER – THE EUCHARIST

Randy Clark – currently associated with the so-called 'Toronto blessing' – In his memories of time when he was the pastor at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Saint Louis, he describes how the celebration of the Lord's Supper was celebrated in this community [15]. Because this congregation consisted of members from various Christian traditions – Lutheran, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist – Clark decided not to impose the faithful on how to interpret the Eucharist. Their decision was whether they believed in transubstantiation or consubstance, or in real Jesus Christ presence, or in the fact that bread and wine are only a symbol. Clark said them how he believed, and they had the freedom to believe the way they want. Everyone, however, participated in the celebrated Lord’s Supper together. The author in his publication shows that the introduction of this practice caused to build up individual members, and the weekly celebrating of the Lord's Supper became a source of God's grace for them. Clark, in addition, emphasizing the importance of celebrating this rite, compares the preaching of the Gospel – which takes place during the sermon and those during the Lord's Supper – to listening to the radio and watching interactive television. The traditional proclamation of the word of God would refer in this juxtaposition to the radio, while the participation in the Lord's Supper to the television. The reason of this is engages all our senses during the Eucharist, not just hearing. It engages our eyes, our taste, our sense of smell and our touch. The above Clark`s opinion encourages those communities in which the Lord's Supper is celebrated only rarely for its frequent performance.

6. EXCLUSIVITY OR OPEN COMMUNION? CATHOLIC AND PENTECOST RESPONSE

During the Catholic-Pentecostal conversations, it was shown that basically in Pentecostal communities practice the so-called 'Open communion'. The report concludes that the only
condition for participation in this rite is acknowledge the Lordship of Christ and have examined their own dispositions (FR II, no. 46). That own examination consists in the inner permission to the Spirit of Christ examine whether the faithful have no unreconciled sin before they obtain to receiving the Lord's Supper. Participants of the Eucharist must confess everything they know is wrong, that God would forgive them and cleanse them soul. This confession of sins takes place during private prayer. Usually the Pentecostals allows only converted and baptized to participate in this rite. It is forbidden to join the Lord's Table to those who have been deprived of this right within the congregational discipline.

Regarding admission to the Lord's Table, the Catholic partners of the talks showed that with the exception of certain cases of spiritual necessity, the Catholic Church allows to communion only its own members, provided that they are free from serious sin. This position – as noted in the Report – does not mean at all the refusal of fellowship with other Christians, but reflects the Catholics' understanding of the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist (FR II, no. 46). The justification for this practice of the Catholic Church has been questioned by the Pentecostals. The discussion partners concluded that the fact of the lack of unity in this matter is a painful experience for both sides, and that it is necessary to conduct further discussions regarding the possibility of admission to the Lord's Table (FR II, no. 47) [16, 17].

7. CONCLUSIONS

Although both partners of the Catholic-Pentecostal conversations in the descriptions of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper refer to the Greek word anamnesis, they, however, understand them differently. While for the Catholics the Eucharist, which occupies a central place in their spirituality, is the presence of the sacrifice that has taken place once and for all on the cross of Christ, for the Pentecostals the Lord's Supper means only the commemoration of this event. As shown in this article, Pentecostals are not unanimous in understanding what the Lord's Supper is. They do not believe, however, that during it the bread and wine will transform truly, really, and substantially into the Body and Blood of Christ, which is the fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church. The presence of the Savior during this rite, according to the Pentecostals, is spiritual. Although Pentecostals basically do not attach so much importance to the Eucharist, as Catholics do, nevertheless for the followers of both communities, this celebration is an important experience that affects the whole of Christian faith [18]. In addition, there are many similarities to Pentecostal spirituality among the religious expressions of Catholics involved in the movement of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit. What undoubtedly connects the Pentecostal and Catholic traditions is that both these communities strive to experience a close relationship with God in a way that is suitable for their spirituality [19]. The ongoing Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue gives possibility to each community can enrich the experiences of the other side.

References


