

[Opinion](#)

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by NCR Staff

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In a series about the Eucharist, [Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese](#) says the Eucharist is not to make Jesus present so we can worship him. Reese also writes about the [Jewish roots of the Eucharist](#), a combination of the Jewish synagogue service and Passover meal as adapted by the early Jewish Christians. [Reese also examines](#) the eucharistic prayer as addressed in thanks and praise to the Father, not to Jesus.

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In Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese's recent article on the real presence (which is excellent), he noted that re: liturgical texts, "The English translations became stilted."

Translating some of those texts into American Sign Language is almost impossible.

**(Fr.) JOSEPH A. MULCRONE**  
**Chicago, Illinois**

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Reese repeats the same nonsense I heard in the seminary about not coming to Mass to adore Christ. He says Jesus did not tell us to worship him but rather the father. But the Lord said, "He who sees me sees the father!"

The three persons of the blessed trinity are one God. That may be a mystery beyond our comprehension, but even a second grader can understand that, if God is truly one, then we adore the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit in every Mass.

**(Fr.) THOMAS A. FLOWERS**  
**Rehoboth Beach, Delaware**

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Reese's article sums up perfectly what has happened to congregations and the Eucharist in Spain.

In the 70s, at the end of Franco's regime, a carefully progressive church broke loose from the shackles of a pre-Vatican II church that had willingly accommodated with Franco's regime.

Sunday Masses were active, joyful and full of large families — responding mums, dads, grans and myriad kids. Little by little the young grew up to a new world and a new Spain and left. The liturgy did not manage to relate to their lives. Latin has not crept back in as in so many other countries, and today is not to be had anywhere.

But over 60s congregations do not go to Communion, do not answer, sit at the back, and nor even warm to Benediction either.

I cannot help thinking this is a natural experience in clericalized church where 700 years have been sped up to fit into just 70 since 1966.

Until the Eucharist takes on its original first Christian form, that process seems doomed to occur again and again no matter how much reform is undertaken.

**GREGORY STARKEY**

**León, Spain**

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Like Reese, I was once dismissive of transubstantiation. Then I went back and re-read what St. Thomas actually wrote about transubstantiation in the *Summa*. Reading Thomas for the first time since I was a teenager was enlightening and very helpful, and now I see no reason to dismiss or downplay transubstantiation. If I as an ordinary lay Catholic with no academic theological education and am able to appreciate the doctrine of transubstantiation, surely other Catholic laypeople can to.

What I'd really love is for St. Oscar Romero's homilies on the Eucharist highlighted in the Eucharistic revival. Actually, someone should really put together a Romero catechism or catechetical program based on Romero's homilies. That man knew how to teach! Those who want to catechize the faithful in an orthodox manner should look to him and our Holy Father Pope Francis.

**JEFFREY JONES**

**Hamburg, New York**

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Reese has suggested ("Eucharist about more than real presence") that Thomas Aquinas' concept of transubstantiation provided an acceptable explanatory framework for the Eucharist in the 13th century because people understood Aquinas' source, Aristotle.

I have spent the last 35 years teaching ancient Greek promulgating the Forasté rule of translation: "If it doesn't make sense in English, you probably haven't translated it correctly." The corollary, however, is this: "This statement does not apply to

Aristotle, which makes no sense in any language." It is an immutable truth.

**DOUGLAS DOMINGO-FORASTÉ**

**Long Beach, California**

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When Edward Schillebeeckx wrote of transignification, Catholic theology of presence caught up with centuries of philosophy. Substance and accident are outdated vestiges of premodern thought.

Just before the COVID-19 lockdown, I moved to Santa Fe and couldn't attend my parish here (the cathedral) because of the scoff-law tourists and lack of vaccine. My refuge was the livestream from my parish of 25 years, back in Boerne, Texas. I continue that weekly attendance because the Eucharist is alive and well, just as I also zoom with a Quaker meeting hundreds of miles away.

If nothing else manifests the mystery of presence beyond the Newtonian universe, those two forms of worship at conventional distance do. I watch dear friends receive "physically" and ignore the anachronistic prayer saying the Communion isn't real, as I celebrate the abundance of a God beyond human comprehension who created space-time and is not constrained by it.

**EMILY ALBRINK HARTIGAN**

**Santa Fe, New Mexico**

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I appreciate the series which Reese offers about the Eucharist and the timeliness of his writings are prescient with the approaching Eucharistic revival which the U.S. bishops' conference is sponsoring. However, I don't share Reese's observation that the center of our worship, the Eucharist, is crumbling along with church attendance.

I see two different phenomena at work since the Second Vatican Council. The much greater attendance at Mass in the immediate aftermath of the council when the liturgy was opened to popular understanding using the vernacular. The drop off in attendance, I do not believe, has any relevance to our misunderstanding of the Eucharist but is symbolic of our changing culture and our divisions. The second is our much more frequent reception of Communion in contemporary times as opposed to the rarity which was the experience, as many perceived it, before the council.

The faithful have greeted the opening up of the church since the council and have been more encouraged by the expectation that we are all participants in the Mass. Hence the widespread reception of Communion. Whether the faithful recognize or even understand the "real presence" of Christ in the host is not really relevant and I don't see it as a concern. The fact that more people are receptive to the Eucharist as a reachable part of our religious experience is more important than the theological attributes of the sacrament which arguably, as Reese suggests, is beyond our understanding.

**CHARLES A. LE GUERN**

**Granger, Indiana**

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I applaud Reese's insights on Eucharist and look forward to upcoming articles. And when will we just come out and say that many current liturgies are simply boring to the bulk of the faithful? To pray together can be a powerful way to connect with God and God's people, but not with words unfamiliar to many or with actions done mostly by one person.

So much more can be done to renew liturgy that relates to young people, to struggling adults, to social justice conscious people, to those yearning for something that touches our souls. Not including women (and LGBTQ people) in positions of liturgy and other church leadership (and inclusive language of course!) continues to be a sin and deterrent that also keeps folks away from feeling that they are the church.

**NANCY DeRYCKE**

**Rochester, New York**

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I was disappointed in the article by Reese on the Jewish roots of Eucharist. There were several points missing.

First, the importance of meals in the Jewish scriptures and traditions and the importance of blessing, breaking and sharing bread, a practice that Jesus would have done daily. The practice relates to not only sharing, but willing to break open lives for others.

Another aspect missing is the importance of Scripture in synagogue worship and practice. There is great emphasis in all of Scripture about the importance of the word and how it feeds and transforms us as the people of God. Early followers of Jesus, while they did for a while participate in synagogue worship, they also gathered to discuss the teachings of Jesus and how to live these teachings for creating a better world, bringing about the reign of God! Then in the remembering of Jesus, they broke bread, committing themselves to breaking open their lives for others like Jesus.

**(Dr.) BARB MINCZEWSKI**

**Saginaw, Michigan**

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In my opinion, the Eucharistic prayer's most important feature was omitted by Reese. He failed to mention that the author of the original institutional narrative was not Jesus or an evangelist.

In the book *Exploring the Evolution of the Lord's Supper In the New Testament*, (© 1994 John Michael Perry) it is clearly revealed that St. Paul conceived the words that we consider to be the "consecration." The Pauline version was written decades before the Gospel version. Furthermore, Paul's intent was clear. He created the original sin dogma that necessitated Jesus' atonement sacrifice. Paul rebranded Jesus as the "Christ" and the Eucharist as the "new Passover." Paul reimagined Judaism through Jesus and ignited a religion that united Jews, followers of Jesus, and Romans/gentiles into one cohesive movement.

Jesus' egalitarian meal, intended to unite all people into an inclusive family, was turned into an atonement sacrifice in which we should be "thankful." The fact that Reese does not even allude to this aspect as important is, in my estimation, a glaring weakness. Furthermore, such meals originally were not "all about Jesus." His meal ministry was not focused as praise, thanks, or worship directed at himself. The "real presence" of Jesus is truly evident when we are one, just as Jesus and the father are one.

The side-by-side comparison of Paul vs. Gospels is compelling. The Catholic additions to the Eucharistic prayer are equally informative.

**MIKE OSLANCE**

**St. Louis, Missouri**