

**HOLY COMMUNION
AND
UNHOLY COMMUNICATION:**



**Demilitarizing the Eucharist
in
an Ever More Militarized Society
and
an Ever More Militarized Church**

The symbolic act of flag burning communicates a certain meaning to the one who sees it. So does the act of flag saluting: Same symbol, radically different meanings.

In my personal judgment, as a matter of Church policy, no Baptized Christian should be denied Holy Communion by a bishop, priest, deacon, or other minister of the Sacrament, at the moment the Baptized Christian approaches to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. At that moment, neither bishops, nor priests, nor deacons, nor any other minister of the Sacrament should be a "cop at the cup." The various tortuous arguments advanced by some churches to justify refusing Communion to those who are not part of their institutional structure, but who are absolutely validly Baptized into Christ, are unconvincing. Something smacks of the phony in a Eucharistic theology and discipline that fully embraces giving Communion daily to Augusto Pinochet while always denying it to Martin Luther King, Jr. If I had anything to say about it, the Catholic Church's policy would be to give Communion to both Pinochet and King. Why? Because, they

were Baptized into Christ. Beyond that objective reality, I do not know and can never know the objective or subjective disposition of the mind, heart, or soul of any communicant when he or she comes forward to receive the Sacrament. What I am sure of is that each communicant who comes forth—including Pinochet, King, and me—is a sinner.

In Christian understanding, evil is that which is contrary to the will of God, as revealed by Jesus. Sin is freely choosing to do what we know is evil. Jesus invites all who are weary and have sinned to come to Him, and He will give them forgiveness, rest, and peace. To ask forgiveness for our sins from Jesus is one of the reasons we approach Him in Communion and, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, forgiveness of sin is one of the effects of receiving Communion (CCC #1393). No Christian, even if he or she is the greatest sinner in the world, should be refused the encounter with the all-forgiving, all-loving Christ-God that is possible only in and through the Eucharist.

Love and Truth

If, however, a person or group is using the Eucharist to publicly declare something to be the will of the Father and the way of Jesus when that something clearly and directly contradicts that will and that way as revealed by Jesus, then the relationship between love and truth becomes a live issue: The moral responsibility of the Christian person or group is plainly not to communicate to the Christian community and to the world that an untruth is Gospel truth, that evil is good. Wearing military garb and/or carrying weapons when receiving Communion are comparable to wearing a sandwich board that reads, “Jesus supports my country’s wars,” or “Jesus supports war sometimes.” This is grave public miscommunication to the gathered community, to the person receiving Communion, and to the world, about the nature and content of the way and the will of God as revealed by the Jesus of the Gospels. In effect, in allowing this, the Church allows Holy Communion to be expropriated as an advertising tool for the unbridled evil that is war.

In such circumstances, a Church policy of not administering Holy Communion to a person arrayed in military clothing or carrying a weapon is not a refusal to give Communion to a Christian sinner qua Christian sinner. Rather, it is the Church inhibiting a Christian from using Communion as a public propaganda microphone to imply—to him or herself and/or to the public in general—that what is not in conformity with the revelation of Jesus in the Gospels is in conformity with that revelation. In a Christian’s subjective conscience, an internal forum, he or she may be able to separate Christ-like love and Christ-revealed truth from one another. The Church, in the public forum, cannot and must not do this. Why? Because, in the person of Jesus, the Word of God “*made flesh*,” there is no separation of truth and love—and the Church by definition is supposed to be the extension of Christ in time and space. The Church is commissioned to “*teach them to obey all that I (Jesus) have commanded you*” (Mt 28:19). It is not commissioned to teach the rationalizations and content of an individual Christian’s personal conscience to which only he or she owes allegiance.

“Packing Heat” as a Way to Communion with Jesus

A liturgical rubric that makes the wearing of military apparel or the carrying of guns to Communion unacceptable is an attempt to prevent the public communication, via the Church’s sacramental system, that something is good when the teaching of Jesus defines it as evil. The issue here is not whether Christian sinners should receive Communion at the Eucharist. They should. All Christian sinners should, if they are so disposed. The issue is not personal sinfulness, nor is it the judgment of a person’s internal spiritual state or good intentions. The issue is the public,

external propagation of wickedness as holiness. It is the public communication—by signs and symbols within the sign and symbol structure of the Holy Eucharist—that evil is good. Such an act sends a message loudly and clearly: “See! God and Jesus support and endorse my homicidal violence and enmity and/or the homicidal violence and enmity of my country.”

Let us be clear: No word in the teaching of Jesus, no deed in the life of Jesus supports such a public communication about him or about God. Nevertheless, this is exactly what is being communicated as the truth of Jesus and His teaching to 99.99 percent of those who see someone receiving Holy Communion while in military dress or “packing heat.” Virtually no one would think upon observing a Christian bedecked in military attire: “Here is the Church welcoming even a sinner,” just as almost no one who saw a person wearing a sandwich-board sign that read, “*Jesus was a schmuck*,” would think, “There is a follower of Jesus.”

“O symbols! We cannot live without ye.”

Human life requires symbolic communication. To fall back on what is almost a cliché, “The human being is a symbol-using, symbol-making, and symbol-misusing animal.” A symbol is a sensory reality, an outward sign, created by some one at some time. It is a sign that represents, stands for, or suggests an idea, belief, action, or material entity other than itself. A symbol may take the form of words, sounds, gestures, actions, or visual images. It is employed to communicate something the employer of the symbol wants or believes and wants others to want or believe. A symbol also is, to quote Joseph Campbell, the pre-eminent scholar of comparative religions, “*an energy-evoking, and directing, agent.*” However, as noted above, human beings are capable of misusing symbols. A symbol can be an outward sign truthfully representing a reality or it can be an instrument of untruth and deception. But note—whether a symbol is an agent for communicating truthfully or for intentionally mis-communicating truth, i.e. for lying, it will still be “*energy-evoking and directing*”—but in different directions.

Veracity and the Theft of Symbols by the Violent

The veracity of a symbol is only important to those for whom truth is important. Symbols are the carriers of truth and untruth into the human situation, and they can be used or misused by their makers. One of the terrible but ignored effects of the Constantinian alteration of the Church is that it has ravaged the content and meaning of the Christian symbol system.

The Constantinian creation and expropriation of Christian symbols on behalf of violence, enmity, war, and the lust for power began supposedly (according to the slightly different accounts of historians Lactantius and Eusebius) on the night of October 27 and 28 in AD 312, the night before the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Constantine had on that night (or before) an apparition or hallucination that involved an image of something similar to a cross or the Greek letters Chi and Rho and the words, “By this, conquer!” He announced that he had been told by Jesus to paint this symbol on his military equipment and that thus adorned it would conquer his enemies. Constantine did this—and for the first time a Christian symbol was conscripted as an ensign to lead people into war and to present engaging in carnal war as consistent with Jesus and His teaching. Constantine proceeded to make this symbol into his *labarum* or *vexillum* (flag), which thereafter was carried into all his excursions into mass human slaughter.

Rosaries tied around machine gun, icons glued to rifle butts, prayers to the “*Father of all*” understood to be the “*Father of all*” of only our little parochial tribe, and the reception of Holy Communion while wearing military garb and/or carrying weapons—all these are direct de-

scendants of the symbol of the phony apparition—or, at least, of the radically misinterpreted and applied apparition—of Constantine.

Only One Jesus

There can be no separation of the reality and the symbol of the Eucharistic Jesus from the reality and symbol of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels, just as there can be no separation of the Christ of faith from the Nonviolent Jesus of history. The Eucharistic Jesus and the Jesus who taught a Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies are eternally and absolutely inseparable.

To underline this truth, here are the words of Pope Benedict XVI from his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*: “*Jesus did not leave behind Him a body of teaching that could be separated from His “I”, as one can collect and evaluate the ideas of great thinkers without going into the personalities of the thinkers themselves. Jesus did not perform a work that could be distinguished from His “I”. On the contrary, He has put Himself into His word. There is no “I” that utters words. He has identified Himself so closely with His word that “I” and word are indistinguishable. He is word.*” The eminent Catholic biblical scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie writes, “*If Jesus can be trusted to have said anything at all, he renounced violence. Jesus taught that violence belongs to the Reign of Satan, and that men must expel violence if they wish to liberate themselves from the Reign of Satan. Jesus in no way accepts violence as a means of controlling violence.*” In light of these statements by Pope Benedict and by John L. McKenzie, it is blasphemy to wear a military uniform, a military “sandwich board,” that communicates that Jesus teaches that war and the acts required in war are good sometimes, up to receiving Holy Communion. This is nothing short of the Reign of Satan camouflaging itself as the Reign of God in order to trick and tempt people into creating hell on earth under the auspices of Jesus.

The Half-Truth

Half-true and half-untrue symbols cannot be symbols that communicate God and God’s will as revealed by Jesus, who is God’s absolute and definitive truthful Word to humans. Indeed, half-truths are the most insidious and powerful forms of deception. An icon of Jesus proclaiming the Sermon on the Mount—from which icon emanates holiness, truth, and love—is an authentic Christian symbol. The very same icon of Jesus—proclaiming the Sermon on the Mount while toting a machine gun, and still purporting to be suggestive of holiness, truth, and love—is an anti-Christian symbol. The Sermon on the Mount communication in the latter icon is true; the machine gun communication in the icon is not only untrue but also invalidates the truth of the Sermon. Regardless of how many people, over how many centuries, accept this half-truth image and interpretation of Jesus, it is and will remain for all time and all eternity a deceitful, anti-truth, anti-love, anti-Christ, anti-God symbol of Jesus and His teaching, manufactured by human cooperation with the spirit that Jesus says is “*a liar and murderer from the beginning.*”

Miscommunication has Consequences

At every level of existence—from the atom to the nerve cell to the human being—when miscommunication takes place, negative consequences follow. When it takes place in the moral domain of the life of a human being or a human community, the negative consequences that follow organically from this choice are called evil and their consequences are called judgment. Whether a Christians clothed in the uniform of trained and willing killer of enemies or bearing weapons of human destruction is permitted or is not permitted to receive Holy Communion when draped in such attire, consequences will follow for the person, the Church and for humanity—but not the same consequences.

A military uniform, as a mere object, is only a number of pieces of cloth sewn together. A gun, as a mere object, is only a number of pieces of metal fitted together. As a symbol, however, military attire represents unequivocally the willingness of an individual to enter into the megawickedness and homicidal violence of war. No one confuses the symbolism of a military uniform with that of a basketball uniform, or vice-versa. Likewise, a weapon is a symbol of an individual's willingness to destroy a human being for some purpose or another. Uniform and weapon both unambiguously symbolize the supposed Christian goodness of acts that Jesus explicitly rejects by word and deed. Acts that are eternally alien to the "I" that is Jesus. If a person cannot set aside his or her military clothing and weapons—both symbols of the evil that Jesus came to conquer, not to justify—for the 30-60 minutes it takes to worship at the Eucharist liturgy, then something is not what it should be in the Christian's life. He or she should be given a dispensation from attending the Eucharist on Sundays until such time as he or she can attend without having such public, anti-Jesus, anti-Way of Jesus, anti-will of the Father symbols draping his or her body—a body previously immersed (Greek, baptizein, baptisma) into Christ and into the Body of Christ.

It Is Not Private Prayer

The Mass—the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy, the Lord's Supper—is, by definition, the public worship of the Church. It is not private prayer. Consequently, the Church has a responsibility to communicate Jesus' true teaching about the God being worshipped at the Eucharist, and about the will of the God the worshipping Eucharistic community is committed to following. "*Receive what you are. Become what you receive,*" is an ancient church formula for the proper disposition one should have toward the reception of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. A Christian could wear a baseball uniform to Communion, and it would not be unacceptable, because such clothing does not inherently publicly communicate that evil is good, that engaging in wickedness is holiness. But if a Christian went to Communion wearing a tee-shirt reading, "abortion is in conformity with the teaching of Jesus," or were to tie suction tubes used for abortions to his or her belt before going to Communion, the same issue would arise as arises with wearing military dress and weapons to receive the Sacrament—publicly morally validating acts that Jesus explicitly rejects.

Communion: An Instrument of Communion

"Communion," by self-evident definition, implies communion. Communion, the Eucharist, is instituted by Jesus to be an instrument of communion between the Father, through Jesus, and among all sons and daughters of the Father, through Jesus. War, preparation for war, and weapons of war are never agencies, instruments, or symbols of communion with God or of the communion of human beings with each other. Rather, they are instruments that destroy communion between God and human beings and among human beings. They are in no way instruments that bring people together in the unity of the Holy Spirit, that is, in "Holy Communion." They are agencies of alliances of people, homicidally united by enmity against other people—brought together in unity by the same unholy spirit. Their symbolic public presence at the reception of Communion turns the symbolism and meaning of the sacrament upside-down. They redirect the consciousness and energy of the symbol away from being an instrument of communion in the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ and toward being an instrument of division in the unholy spirits that cause and execute all wars.

Near the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "*If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your*

gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:23-24).

For Jesus, the obligation of reconciliation takes precedence over the obligation of worship. Is not a military uniform or a weapon at Communion a public symbol that reconciliation has not only not taken place, but also that, in fact, lethal enmity remains? In either case, this military sandwich board, which publicly communicates the opposite of Jesus’ teaching and Jesus’ “I,” has no place at the Eucharist. It has no business using Communion to religiously validate the opposite of what Jesus taught, even though the Constantinian alteration of Christianity has reduced to irrelevancy this teaching of Jesus, as it has every other teaching of Jesus that does not serve the interests and purposes of the economic and political class who control the state. Once again, it is the military clothes and weapons that are the external sandwich-board communicating that Mt 5:23-24 does not have to be followed, that we do not have to do what Jesus tells us to do before approaching the altar. That is the issue, not the individual’s subjective disposition or sinfulness at the moment. Military uniforms and weapons are symbols of the willingness to kill enemies, not reconcile with them, let alone reconcile with them before approaching the altar. The obligations of worship and the obligations of war are incompatible if Jesus knows whereof He speaks.

Praise the Lord...

“Praise the Lord and pass the Cup, and then pass the ammunition” may be the content of someone’s personal conscience. But when that content is made a public communication at the reception of Jesus in Holy Communion at a Eucharistic liturgy, it unabashedly communicates that the wickedness of war, or at least the home team’s wickedness in war, and the communicant’s willingness to participate in this wickedness, is somehow under the divine patronage of Jesus.

Such a communication is nothing short of “in your Face” false witness and public blasphemy. Such a teaching cannot be found in the person, deeds or words of Jesus nor in the Apostolic tradition. But, it is this very content—the wickedness of war under the divine patronage of Jesus— that the church and hence the Eucharist pass on through the symbols of military garb and weapons ornamenting Christians at the reception of Holy Communion. These symbols are not symbols or instruments of the Holy or of communion. They are bearers of public false witness regarding Jesus and His Way, when worn and/or carried when receiving Holy Communion.

Jesus Does Not Endorse Wickedness Because Wickedness Receives a Name Change

Jesus, Christ-God, will forgive every sin of every sinner, if asked. Asked or not, He will embrace every sinner in His Love. But what He will not do—what He cannot do without contradicting His own Being—is allow falsehood about Himself and His will and His way to be passed off as truth. He cannot allow what He, as the Word (Logos) of God incarnate, explicitly called evil to be called good. For Jesus, wickedness does not become goodness if it is called by another name, e.g., justice or love. In the context of this reflection, the wickedness of that mega-manifestation of the evils of violence and enmity, namely, war, remains full blown wickedness, no matter whether some one or another renames it good. As the living and only Head of the Church, the Body of Christ, Jesus commissions His Church and each member of His Body to teach the same truth about God, good, and evil that he taught: “*Teach them to obey **all** that **I** have commanded you” (Mt 28:19) [emphasis added].*

In no way, shape, or form, nor for any reason, can the truth of the Eucharist as instituted by Jesus support or countenance any killing, any war, or any participation in killing in war by those He has chosen to be His disciples and witnesses to the ends of the earth and to the end of time. As Rev. John L. McKenzie writes, *“We have tried to produce a form of Christianity that will be tolerable to those who believe that the best way to deal with your enemies is to beat their heads in. And, we have done this. We have produced the Christian ethic of the just war. This is not the New Testament and every theologian knows it.”* This being the case, the Christian churches should cease their misuse of Eucharistic symbolism and stop publicly proclaiming and stop others from publicly proclaiming at the Eucharist that something is logically consistent with the teaching of Jesus when it is in fact the precise opposite.

In the Catholic Church, the Bishop is supposed to be the “Keeper of the Symbols.” This pastoral and teaching responsibility is his because he, as a successor of the Apostles, has been explicitly commissioned by Jesus to “teach them to obey all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19). Unless Christian symbols initially and continually present content intrinsically, logically consistent with the truth as presented by Jesus, then—regardless of their surface Christian appearance—they teach people to obey, not Jesus, but someone or something other than Jesus. There is a rather unpleasant name for such activity.

Military clothing and weapons worn during the reception of the Eucharist symbolize everything that Mark Twain’s *War Prayer* enunciates in detail. And Mark Twain’s *War Prayer* is a prayer no disciple of Jesus should ever pray at a public Eucharistic liturgy or privately. Although I suspect that, due to habitual gross pastoral laxity by the Church’s symbol-keepers, public prayers comparable to the *War Prayer* have been raised to heaven at uncountable Eucharistic gatherings since the days of Constantine. And, the brutalized victims of this laxity and/or calculated indulgence on the part of the keepers of symbols pockmark the face of the earth in untold numbers.

The Supper of the Lamb is Not a Soap Box for Raising Hell on Earth

War is hell. War is from hell and of hell. War is wickedness in the extreme. War is enmity toward the other and an attempt to destroy and maim the object of enmity. War is a spiritual and a



moral abomination that opens wide the gates of hell for every form of suffering, degeneracy, perversion, and evil that exists. It permits them to run rampant within human beings and among human beings—and that is observable fact, not opinion. The acts that war requires are as far removed from Jesus and His teaching as hell is from heaven. Military uniforms and weapons are but gilded, deceitful

symbols of the eruption of hell into the human situation; namely, the wickedness called war. Military uniforms and/or weapons and what they symbolize have no place at the “Supper of the Lamb” in eternity or in time. The person, however, most assuredly does. All people most assuredly do.

Selling Out the Supreme Act of Worship

It is a tragedy to see the supreme act of worship in the Church, the source and summit of the Church’s prayer life, placed at the disposal of state slaughter, and at the beck and call of those wicked spirits of war symbolized by military attire and weapons. Their presence and acceptance interject into the Eucharist a cacophony of gong-booming, cymbal-clashing confusion and ugliness. Misdirection is their insidious purpose. The actual operational effect of this sycophantic and planned obscuring and corrupting of the meaning of Eucharistic symbolism is to make the Eucharist another—but critical—lethal weapon in the state’s arsenal, one that allows war, violence, and enmity to be interpreted as valid ways of following Jesus.

To proclaim an act acceptable in God’s eyes is to motivate and promote that act; just as to proclaim that an act can never be done in God’s name is to discourage people from even considering it. Jesus authorizes no Christian of any rank to substitute violence for love. Yet the direct opposite of this reality is exactly the public communication made when military attire, artifacts, and weapons become part of the permitted symbolism of the Eucharist. The Eucharist employed as a weapon of violence against earthly enemies is a *de facto* historical reality, just as carrying the Torah or the Koran into battle for the same purpose is a fact. The meaning and



purpose of all three are the same. That meaning and purpose are blasphemous, if God is the kind of God revealed by Jesus, if God expects from those He created what Jesus teaches He expects.

“Men start wars, not nations,” goes the truism. The war-causing class and war-profiteering class have every interest in seeing to it that the Eucharist and Holy Communion

remain symbols whose meaning is, at a minimum, ambiguous in relation to the colossal wickedness of war and, at a maximum, are fully supportive of their country’s wars. More than this, because war and the preparation for war is the biggest business on the planet, the war-causing class and war-profiteering class desire to usurp every Christian symbol, starting with the Eucharist, so they can “officially” communicate to Christians that Jesus’ way is the way of *“Si vis pacem, para bellum,”* “If you want peace, prepare for war,”—which it most certainly is not.

The war-victims’ class, who comprise 99 percent of the people of the world, and of the churches, desperately need the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and the Apostolic Tradition, the Non-

violent Eucharistic Jesus and the Nonviolent God “made visible” in Jesus returned to the Church and proclaimed unequivocally by the Church’s leaders. The war-victims’ class is beaten down daily by Christian signs and symbols that are nothing other than military recruiting tools and war endorsing public relations efforts in the name of Jesus on behalf of the war-causing and war-profiteering classes. Permitting military recruiting schemes and war endorsing paraphernalia at the Eucharist is nothing other than the church exercising a preferential option for the war-causing and war-profiteering classes. It amounts to a big time selling out Jesus, while simultaneously deceiving and recruiting the war-victims’ class big time.

What is required is clear, simple and easy: Take off the military garb, the military sandwich board, before participating in the Eucharist and going up to receive Holy Communion.

Christian children in line for First Communion?



Why not, if the previous photos illustrate a legitimate way to receive Holy Communion?



An Unholy Communion

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