

## Table of Remembrance

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The theme announced for this Institute is "Grace upon Grace: Living Bread." In this keynote address I have been asked to set an ecumenical tone for your conversations about the Eucharist, speaking to "how it means" for the faithful and drawing upon my own theology—which reviewers, both Lutheran and Evangelical, have dubbed a distinctively Roman Catholic theology but one that is ecumenically open and challenging. I think this means that it opens the way to better mutual understanding and enrichment. Drawing on this theology, I have chosen five headings under which to offer my considerations: the Eucharist as testament of service, the Eucharist as an invitation to table, the Eucharist as a table where memories are stored, the Eucharist as a table where Jesus Christ is guest, host and gift, and the Eucharist as a table of blessing.

### *Testament of Service*

I will thus begin by recalling a particularly Catholic rite. On Holy Thursday in Catholic churches there is the service of the washing of feet, which follows after the reading of John's account (John 13) of how the Lord washed the feet of the disciples in the Upper Room and told them to serve each other in kind. Today this service has unfortunately become contentious because of the ordinance to wash the feet of 12 men only, but this is based on a misunderstanding of the origins of the rite. When introduced into the liturgy, it was not meant to be a reenactment of the Lord's action at the Last Supper but a ritualization of a hospitable practice of service. That is to say, it started in monasteries with the monks' response to the command: As I have done to you, so do you likewise to one another. Taking the Abbot's lead, and following the Lord's example and command, the monks washed the feet of the poor who came to the monastery for hospitality and on Holy Thursday washed one another's feet and drank a festive glass of wine together. The rite was a practical response to love the poor, and to love each other, as Christ had loved his own.

It has often been noted that John's Gospel does not record the table blessing and eucharistic words of Jesus in giving bread and wine to his disciples on this last night. What it does give is the prelude to the meal. For his disciples Jesus fulfilled the duty usually reserved to a servant. He would not give them his gift unless they could recognize who he truly was. He gave them access to the table of his body and blood by obliging them to pass through this act of service, presenting them with the living tableau of the Servant of Yahweh. He could not be host unless he would first be servant. He thereby gave them a key to understanding the death that he predicted and a key to understanding the gift and sacrament of his body and

blood. He also admonished them by his action and service command that they could not share this sacrament together in truth and fidelity unless they were servants and friends to each other and to the poor and distressed of this world. In Jewish society, one invited to table was given access to it by having his feet washed. In Christian gatherings, one has access to the table of the sacrament by doing this service for another.

Starting with his commentary on the letter to the Hebrews and his *Treatise on the Mass or New Testament*, Martin Luther developed a strong theology of the sacrament as a testament, in part because he worked on a Latin—and not a Greek—translation of the Supper Narrative. Luther portrayed the sacrament as the testament of the Lord before his death, the gift that Jesus gave to the church to testify to his death for the service of sinners and the abiding pledge of the atoning grace of this saving death for those who receive it in faith. Using that image of testament, and learning from the service of the washing of the feet in John's Gospel, one would have to say that it is integral to the testament of the Lord's Supper that those who receive it are called to be servants to one another as Christ was to his own.

The sense of the Lord's action at the Last Supper is completed by recalling those occasions when he himself was honored as a guest. When Mary washed his feet, he foretold his burial (John 12:1-8). When the disciples of the road to Emmaus asked him, a traveller, to stay the night and share their table at the inn, Jesus made himself known in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:38-42). When invited at the beginning of his ministry to the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus gave the couple an overflow of good wine (John 2:1-10). Note how these occasions of receiving Jesus as a guest were revelations—an opening of the eyes to his presence, an opening of the heart—that permitted the young couple, Mary, and the Emmaus disciples to allow Jesus the guest to act as host and giver. The revelation of the last judgment in Matthew's gospel is anticipated in such actions. In a reversal of the roles of the Last Supper, Christ must be received as guest, or, in other words, the guests are to be received as Christ.

#### *Invitation to Table*

By washing their feet, Jesus invited his disciples to the table of his bounty. In our own experience an invitation to table is, in difficult circumstances, a sign of encouragement. For the homeless on Thanksgiving, at Christmas, or on Holy Thursday, the invitation to a dinner is a sign that they are not quite forgotten. This meal may lift their spirits and hold out encouragement for the future.

When there have been rifts between friends or neighbors or in families, an invitation to break bread together promises reconciliation. At funerals, the food and drink are a kind of *refrigerium*, a communion among the living that offers comfort in loss, and a communion with the dead that undoes death's apparent finality. But the readiness either to invite to table or to accept an invitation lies in an openness of spirit, of heart and body,

that breaks the sinews of the heart, that opens a broken heart to the companionship of others, that shows how plentiful the table is, which when eaten at alone seems bare and discouraging.

Note how many times Jesus himself used the invitation to table to overcome fears, to reveal truths, and to indicate his presence, both during his mortal life and after his resurrection. Sinners and tax-gatherers were his companions, to the scandal of others (Mark 2:15-17). The crowd of hearers of his word who succumbed in the desert to fatigue were invited to sit and take what was given them (Mark 6:30-44). The disciples in the Upper Room, half joyful and half fearful, were reassured when he took the fish that they offered him to eat (Luke 24:36-43), just as they were convinced of the Lord's presence by the broiled fish on the shore of the lake (John 21:9-14).

In keeping their community gatherings and in sharing a common table, early Christians knew well Jesus's own habit of sharing a table with his disciples. They also knew how he had sat at table with sinners and with people, such as the publicans, whose role in life kept them outside the full practice of the Jewish law (cf. Mark 2:15-17). They had heard the stories of how he had blessed and broken bread as he fed the thousands who on more than one occasion had followed him out into desert places, without food to eat (cf. Mark 6:35-44; Mark 8:1-9; John 6:1-14). They were also familiar with the different stories of how the risen Lord had made himself known in breaking bread, in asking for food, or in offering food, as he did on the shores of the lake (cf. Luke 24:30-31, 41-43; John 21:9-14).

Most of all they knew the story of the last meal that he had shared with his disciples on the night before he suffered his passion and death. They heard tell of how he had washed their feet before they came to the table as a sign of his love and service, and of how in speaking with them he had voiced both his anguish in the face of death and his willingness to suffer it for their sake. It was within this setting that, in blessing the bread and the cup, he had praised God for blessing the people and the world through his death, anticipating therein his resurrection from the dead as the sign of God's promise of salvation for the living and the dead. Thus blessing God over the bread and the wine, and giving this blessed sacrament of his body and blood to his table companions, he had adjured them to continue to keep memorial of him. In the days after the Lord's resurrection and ascension, the ritual of the blessed bread and wine fitted into the life of the community of early disciples and believers.

Today, the cultural background that supports an appreciation of the Lord's Supper is sparse. It is startling to think that God sealed the promise of salvation offered in Christ at the table sacrament that Jesus shared with his disciples and left to the church. Perhaps it is only through listening first to the stories of how Jesus made the blessed table central to all his teaching, and of how he fed the crowds in the desert, or made himself known after the resurrection in the breaking of bread, that we can begin to sense the place that the eucharistic sacrament has in our life as a church. That

may invite change not only in our way of celebrating the sacrament but even in our family practices and the other ways in which we express our oneness as Christ's followers. It may remind us quite sharply that the eucharistic table does not stand alone, even when the richness of the word has been retrieved. As in the early churches, in ways that we must needs discover, it belongs in the context of shared meals, shared support, open hospitality, and a practice of unlimited charity (Acts 2:43-47).

When the sharing of the Lord's Supper genuinely emerges as central to such a table practice, it has to generate an ethics of justice, in face of the knowledge of the multitudes that are not admitted to the human table, to the existence as sisters and brothers of those who when invited to partake of Christ's body and blood do not come in plenty but in want. What can this table promise the hungry? What does their sharing of the morsel of bread and the sip of wine have in common with our sharing of the morsel and the sip amid the plenty of our lives?

#### *A Table Where Memories are Stored*

We eat and drink in memory of Jesus and his Passover and in the anticipation of a richer banquet. Memories are indeed stored at tables. How often when people are gathered at a table are memories spoken. First there are the joyful memories, those that speak of what is had in common, of bonding and of good times shared. But then come even those memories that we do not dare to speak for fear of what they stir up, yet, once spoken, are found not to be frightening at all but full of the power of reconciliation and of hope.

Again, we think of the disciples in the upper room, or of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, afraid, disappointed, remembering cruel death. But Jesus reminds them of other truths, and over the table the memories take another shape, one that promises life and hope.

From New Testament accounts, can we also gather the rhythms of keeping memory? In effect, while memory of Christ's actions evoked something strangely new for his disciples and believers, it fit into their known patterns of religious commemoration. Whether Jews or gentiles, they were people whose life experience taught them the role and importance of a shared table and for whom this was a formal part of their experience of the holiness, presence, and blessings of God. In a particular way, the stories of Jesus and the bidding of his memorial command inspired them to draw on Jewish customs of memorial and on stories of the ancient scriptures to enhance their appreciation of the memorial and eucharistic sacrament bequeathed to them.

In the traditions of their Jewish forebears, the sabbath meal, the annual Passover seder, and the blessings that accompanied every table-gathering were significant moments in the commemoration of Yahweh's mighty works and saving deeds. It was by such table-blessing and communion that the people continued to be a part of God's people. On these various

table occasions, they shared in the gracious work of God's creation, in the saving deeds of the Pasch, Exodus, and Covenant, and in the inheritance that God had continued to renew through beneficent action down through the ages, whatever trials and tribulations the people suffered. The three nights of creation, of the sacrifice of Isaac, and of the Pasch kept them hoping for the night of the coming of the Messiah.

Christians saw themselves as inheritors of all these benefits, renewed now, however, through the sealing of God's Covenant in the blood of Christ. It was natural for them to continue to commemorate, celebrate, and share God's blessing in a common table, and more specifically in the ritual of the broken bread and shared cup that they were able to relate more particularly to the words and actions of Jesus himself at the Last Supper. Inspired by the law and the prophets that Jesus himself had drawn upon in teaching his followers, particularly at the Last Supper and on the road to Emmaus, the apostles and other teachers of the word, and all those who presiding over the meal of discipleship blessed the bread and wine. They sought to evoke the full significance of Christ's death and resurrection and of the promise of his future coming. They drew therefore upon the stories of salvation, upon prophetic utterances, or upon ritual occasions of the past that seemed to best help them express their faith in Jesus Christ and in the saving power of his death.

To those who in keeping memory of Jesus Christ remained mindful of the ritual of the Paschal Lamb there was a keen resonance to Paul's words, "Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7). The follow-up on this, however, was also evocative as to how to live by the promise of this death: "Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5:8).

In their own simple ritual of the blessed bread and wine, over which they made thanksgiving to God in commemoration of Jesus Christ, the Christian people felt that they shared even more abundantly in all that had been shared in these Old Testament rituals of deliverance, redemption, covenant, and promise. For them the blood of Christ spoke more loudly than the blood of Abel or Isaac, or than the blood of a Paschal lamb, Exodus offering, or temple sacrifice. Seeing in Jesus's death, resurrection, and promise of his future coming the fulfillment of all these types, rituals, and figures, they could not but be sensitive to the words of Isaiah about God's chosen servant: "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. . . Yet it was the will of God to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (Isaiah 53:7,10).

There is thus much cumulative memory stored up for us today in the eucharistic rites and sacrament. But often the root memories are recalled only if those at table dare to cross the cruel memories that they shy away

from and yet must pass through to come to what unites and brings consolation and hope. When Jewish people gathered in times of old, they did not keep memorial of Pasch, Covenant, and Passover without adverting to more recent memories that seemed at odds with the original story and promise. Memories of captivity, exile, defeat, and betrayal invaded their table. But even though forced to lament over these more recent tales, they did not cease to keep alive the flame of Passover and Sabbath memories and did not hesitate to keep their vow to praise Yahweh at all times and in all things.

The Shoah of this century was, of course, the most cruel challenge to their faith in Yahweh and the Covenant. Who can be surprised if some among the Jewish people for a time kept Sabbath and Paschal silence? But then we find them marking the tragedy with special Days of Remembrance and marking their Paschal Seders with holocaust stories. Eating of these bitter herbs, their ancient memories, their faith, and their praise break forth even more vigorously.

Christians oddly tend to evade provocative memories at their eucharistic rituals or to remember them only in the attenuated form of mild petition, rather than with a shout of grievance and protest. But to remember Christ across the centuries, we have to be met by the failure of Christians, by their hatred for Jews and Muslims and their hatred for one another or by the suffering of so many believers to whose aid Christ did not come. In the pattern of the ecumenical circles that we are presently drawing, we must in particular walk the bitter divide of Christian churches. Even today, as we dare to remember the divisions and those who divided, and share one another's memories, we are invited to see the work of Christ, broken by our stubbornness, but calling us to renewal, not division.

As we dare to remember the pogroms, the wars of religious division, we weep. But we also find the valiance of fidelity to God. We learn to lament in order to remember more boldly. We even have to dare our way into one another's theologies, rites, and prayers. For a Catholic, to read Martin Luther on the Testament, to pray the communion service of the Book of Common Prayer, to take the leavened bread of an Orthodox service, or to share a Seder of Paschal remembrance can be part of one's own memories and hopes.

Memories, good and bad, are called forth by the invitation to come to the table, prompting the question: why is this table different to all other tables and this day different to all other days? How does it sound, even in the abyss of our bitter pottage, to hear again the law and the prophets, to evoke the descent into hell, where Christ joined Adam and Eve and the holy ones of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant? For us who have lived these Christian centuries, what is it to weave a story with hope, filled though it is with violence and sin? What is it to be bearers of a memory strong enough to overcome the fear of death when we look on the crucified Christ and receive into our midst the Spirit of the risen Lord who empowers us to remember?

The habits of our contemporary world make us less sensitive to the importance and significance of a common table or the sharing of a common story. Not many bless God at the beginning of their meals when indeed they do eat with others, whether families, friends, or associates. The memories of how people formed family bonds around a table or of how religious convictions found expression at the table in the recalling of past events may come hard to the children of this age. There is hardly a great awareness that when we share food and drink we do something holy, receiving such sustenance as the gift of earth or of God's bounteous creation. But for those who remember, Jesus Christ is the guest and the host, and the gift that is given.

*Christ the Guest, Host, and Gift*

Christ invites, Christ is the guest, and the guests are Christ. In the invitation received and in the invitation extended to others, when the bread is broken and the cup passed, we know the Lord not only as host or as guest but as our food and drink. However, if we have not come to hear his invitation or to receive him as guest, we may not have the faith to recognize him in the bread and wine.

Martin Luther battled much, first to assert the need and the quality of faith that brings one to the sacrament, and then to uphold the truth of the body and blood of the Savior given, a truth, however, that he wanted without the fiddle-faddle of metaphysical theories.

Unhappily, there was a decided lack of mutual appreciation between Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians, and Calvinists, and of course in the British Isles between those of the established church and those who invoked fidelity to Rome. We may now regret it and even feel the spite and quarrel to have been unnecessary. Nonetheless, it would be absurd to have Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, and Ulrich Zwingli say the same thing. But it is possible to see that in much they sought expression of the same faith or truth but did so in different ways. These are ways that still cannot be reduced to a common denominator but are not mutually exclusive or deserving of reciprocal anathemas, such as were hurled at one another at the time. We might actually be able to get beyond them all to find an appreciation of the sacrament that unites us in our diversity, even a rich diversity. And so we are challenged to an appreciation of the gift given us at the table of remembrance.

What is the gift? It is the body and the blood of the Savior, the sacrament that invites us to look to the broken body and saving blood of Christ, not to flinch from the descent into hell, the abandonment to the power of death and of sheol in which love shows itself in a sin-torn humanity. With Luther, in the strength of the sacrament we dare to look upon the crucified Christ when we come to the hour of death. With Thomas Aquinas we find in this final gift of Christ to his own the affectionate memories of his generous love. With Calvin, drinking the cup spurs us to plead the blood of

Christ when burdened by sin. With Cranmer, we approach the table in the humble access, trusting in God's manifold graces and mercies.

We are not ignorant of the form in which the gift is given or of the symbols that enhance for us its meaning. For Luther or Zwingli or Calvin, as before for Francis of Assisi, such lowly presence was a remembrance of the Word's humility and poverty in coming among us. For Thomas Aquinas, it was a presence that expressed expectation and kept the church alive to the love that Jesus showed to his own in delivering himself over to death.

Luther obviously knew a lot of aberrations, but I doubt that he knew all of genuine catholic piety, either before or during his time. Even when we acknowledge that in the Middle Ages looking had largely replaced taking, it is well to remember that the looking was a form of communion in the passion and that devotion to the Cross and devotion (filled with desire) to the sacrament were intensely united.

Thomas Aquinas wanted to find a way that would express a presence quite different to the way in which Christ walked the earth. He saw it as a way that would bring the church to communion in the memory of Christ's Pasch, but in communion with the risen Christ and in the expectation of glory, of an eternal communion with the living God whose love was shown in the gift of the Son and kept alive in the gift of the sacrament. It was a theory of presence that was meant to foster holy communion or sacramental reception, not the seeing that had taken over the practice of the common table.

With the attention that they bring to this sacrament—either to Christ's humility or to the desire for glory—there seems little room for either Catholics or Reformers to be by tradition very sensitive to the food and drink that are placed there to be blessed and transformed. We all pass too lightly over the manner of Christ's giving, over the fact that he gives in food and drink the fruits of the earth and the stuff of people's tables. In his own way, Thomas Aquinas wanted to keep his readers alive to this by stressing time and time again that the sacrament kept its properties to nourish and fatten, to slake thirst and to inebriate. Luther in his way kept alive the sense of sacrament in talking of Christ present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine. But they did not let it capture their imaginations.

We need to go back to early Christian prayers, especially East Syrian, or to Irenaeus of Lyons, to note how in the blessing and transformation of the bread and wine, not only those who partake but earthly things and earth itself are blessed and transformed. Irenaeus was appalled at how the gnostics divided spirit and matter and by dividing them divided God. He was convinced that one could not pray in the name of Christ—the just Abel of the covenant, the mediator between earth and heaven, the reconciler of flesh and spirit, the redeemer—unless one remembered the work of creation. He was immersed in the proclamation that rang out at the Paschal vigil in the celebration of the night of the Pasch, with its elemental blessings of night, of fire, of light, of water, of oil, of bread and wine, with its

creation story and with its wisdom about living on the earth and seeing God's not only creative but redemptive hand in all things.

Pessimism about the earth on the one hand, and the attempt to dominate it on the other, are too strongly integral to our western and even Christian heritage. It is a part of ourselves that needs redeeming. It can be helped by remembering the gift of creation as we recall the gift of redemption, by remembering Christ as the Word in whom God created and redeemed, by praying in the Spirit who hovered over the waters and hovers over the table as a mother dove, and by respecting the bread and wine as such, even as we receive in them the gift of Christ's body and blood. Only to those who reverence bread, wine, oil, and water as God's creation, who sense that God has made humans one with earth and galaxy, does the power of Christ's saving grace come in its full promise and splendor. From the reconciling table of Christ's body and blood, we may learn to be reconciled at all our tables, among ourselves, and with earth and heaven.

In short, our table of remembrance may keep us ever inebriated with the joy of an Easter night brighter than any day, when death is overthrown, when sin is nailed to the tree of the Cross, when Christ rising from the tomb breaks through the rock, when sheol yields its prey, when the elements themselves break forth in praise, when the body and blood of Christ are received for the forgiveness of sin, for the immortality of the flesh, for the release of all creation from its captivity.

*The Table of Blessing*

Both Scholastic theology and the sixteenth-century Reformers attributed sacramental power to the repetition of the words of Christ. Trent, Luther, Cranmer, Zwingli, and Calvin disputed among themselves in a West that had lost an appreciation of the power of eucharistic prayer and of the power of Christ's Spirit working through it when it was prayed in his name. All were indeed concerned to find the right prayers to accompany the sacrament, whether it was the offering of Catholic piety, the sacrifice of thanksgiving of Lutheran devotion, the prayer of self-offering of Anglican service, or the pleading of the blood of Genevan sensitivity to sin. But none seemed to see that the power of Christ's word, of Christ as God's Word, of the Spirit of the risen Lord, had entered into the prayer of the church, invigorating it with the renewing and creative vigour of the Spirit.

Today, we are better attuned to eastern church perspectives and can recognize the power of the Spirit working in the prayer of a church that is the body of Christ, in which Christ and Christ alone has the power to mediate life by his saving death and in the power of his Spirit, and in which he lives as the guest and the host and the gift. Hearing the Word and remembering Christ in story and expectation leads to thanksgiving and supplication. Among sixteenth-century disputants, Zwingli was closest to the sense of thanksgiving in his prayers. Roman Catholicism was preoccupied with the power of "the priest's offering." As it turned out, when theologians at

Trent got to talking about it, this in fact meant the power of the supplication that he made in the person and power of Christ, and in the memory of Christ as victim of the sacrifice of the Cross.

What was most lacking in western liturgies was the sense that it was a prayer of thanksgiving and doxology that led the congregation to the table of the Lord's body and blood. Luther had rightly emphasized the nature of the sacrament as gift to be received in faith. What he along with the whole West missed was that the prayer deepened faith by deepening the sense of thanksgiving and praise. The community that blesses God—and in blessing God blesses the bread and wine—comes to the communion of the body and blood in faith, hope, and desire for communion with God in Christ and the Spirit.

The challenge put to us by the eucharistic prayers that now adorn our service books is fourfold. First, the retrieval of the great thanksgiving prayer can be the deepening of a faith that is enlivened by remembrance and doxological reverence, a faith in which we can then approach the table of the body and blood of Christ. Second, we need to ask whether we can, as, for example, Augustine did, see the power of the prayer of Christ working in and through the prayer of the church, to find Christ praying where the church prays. Third, we have to ask whether at the table, in blessing the table in Christ's name as we eat and drink, we find a communion between the living and the dead. When we remember one another, remember the saints, remember all the living and the dead, as we recall the Pasch of Christ and acknowledge the power of his Spirit at work among us, do we not find expressed in praise, thanksgiving, and supplication the communion of all the redeemed?

Fourth, there is a challenge that I hold before you from a Catholic perspective. Because of the blood of Christ and because of his life-giving Spirit that pledges us to pray, is there not by chance a power in the church's prayer that is of Christ—given benefit to the living and the dead who are remembered? In the body and blood we receive the promise of immortality not only for ourselves, but for the whole earth, however it may be transformed in the emergence of the new heavens and the new earth, which are brightened by the presence of the Lamb. Does our prayer over the bread and wine not reflect this and express this reality? Is it not thus that Christ creates anew, transforming the bread and wine into the sacrament of his body and blood, and in that transformation holding out a hope for all the living and dead, a hope that falls like snow over the whole earth?

*Conclusion: "How It Means"*

And so with all of this, can we finally say of the Sacrament "how it means"? It is, in fact, a matter of letting it mean, not of making it mean. We need to be open to the words, signs and actions of the table, to let them address us, call us to faith in Christ, call us into communion with him in his Passover, in his love of God and in his love of this world, human beings

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and all our fellow creatures.

The Passover sacrament is for us the night that is brighter than any day, when Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed. It is the vigil that envelopes creation and promises life unbroken, unending, the word spoken that stretches our imagination of what is to come by the memory of Christ's work, God's love, and the work of the Spirit. It is the celebration of lives brightened by hope in the midst of darkness. It is the sacrament in which we embrace in communion, in face of division. Through it, we are nourished by Christ's body when famished for justice; we are inebriated by Christ's blood when thirsting for peace. By the truth of its gift and its promise we are forgiven, even when adding to the sin of the world; we are brought together with the expectation of life renewed and life unending, even when overshadowed by the fear and despair of death and death-inflicting powers.

With Christ as our host, our guest and our life-giving nourishment, we have no need of other mediators, and we are ourselves the Body in Spirit, in which the living Christ takes form and flesh in the world and continues to offer it the gift of his love and of his life-giving spirit. United at table, where Christ is servant, guest, host and food, we can be one in Spirit and in truth. Thus,

United in keeping remembrance, instructed by the Word and empowered by the Spirit, we can be one in the hope of God's kingdom.

United in prayer in Christ's name, and by a descending Spirit, we can be one in a faith that moves mountains and that draws together the faithful people of both covenants, the living and the dead of all times and all places.

United in the testimony of hospitality and service, we can be one in a love that drives out all fear.

United in face of destructive powers, destroying human communion and the pledge to earth, we can be one in a communion with earth and heavens.

United in the love that flows out from God and that draws us back into God, we can be in the eternal perichoresis of the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit.