

INSPIRE Convocation 1

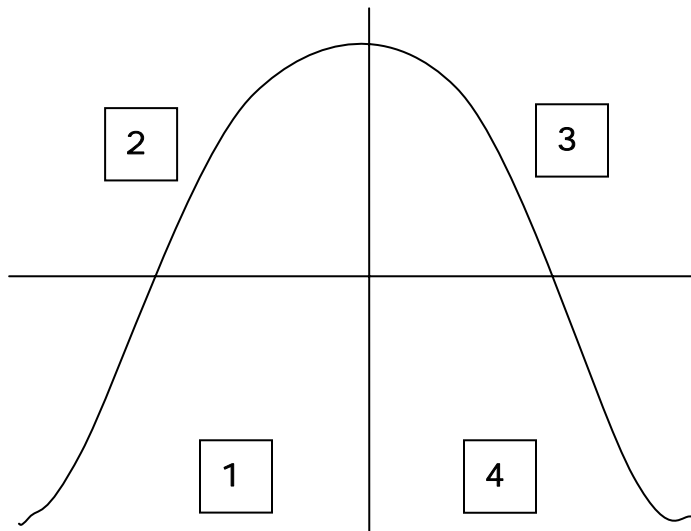
Transcript from audio recording

Address to INSPIRE Convocation on September 09, 2004
at Loyola University Chicago

“No Them There” John Haughey, S.J.

It is good to be here. What you have experienced, I presume, in this last hour, is the creativity of parishes—the unique culture that is a parish—the organizational idiosyncrasy which is a parish.

Today I would like to take the first text that was written, probably, around twenty years after the Passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. The first text on “what is the Eucharist”. I would like to show, on an organizational chart, the importance of what we understand Eucharist to be.



This is an organizational chart and it comes from an organizational theory, and I’m assuming that every parish is an organization, not just a culture, not just a unique culture. So the theory about organization, how it is generative, and how it degenerates, is a very important theory, and I’ll put it with great simplicity.

We start off with a series of “I’s”. I’m myself, you’re yourself, they are themselves. And we grow together, in some way that creates a “we”. And when it, the group together, becomes dysfunctional, we revert back to being a series of “I’s”.

Some day I’ll learn how to do PowerPoint, but this is what you’re going to get before that. Organizations come together to do something. If they are business organizations, they come together to make products, so Loyola University wants to produce extraordinary students. The Ford Motor Company wants to make the best cars. IBM wants to produce something in the electronic area...and St. Sylvester’s Parish wants to produce something. All of these are interested in the generating of a “we”, an “us”.

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There are two levels at which the “we” can be generated: the ordinary level is quadrant two. In quadrant two is a series of policies aimed at a mission with hired personnel to pursue that mission...like the pastor and his coworkers. It’s a series of programs, it’s a series of **ritualizations**, it’s all in function of generating a “we”. It has a history of relationships, of crisis, of changes, of pastors, of successes. I want to call that that second quadrant the effective quadrant.

I want to call the first quadrant the “Affective” quadrant. “Affective” meaning what? Affective meaning that the “I” that enters the organization is grabbed by a story...is grabbed by a founding vision...is grabbed by a visionary...is grabbed by a special giftedness of that founding figure. That first quadrant is the will, the affective will, which generates the energy that makes a different quality of “we” than if the organization simply starts at the effective level.

So there are two entry points for the “I’s” in an organization. The “Affective” level or the “Effective” level. So I could enter a parish, I could come to a new parish and I could understand it in terms of its programs and its personal and It’s history, or I could enter a parish and understand it in terms of the deep story from which it came; the deep story being the Christ story.

Every “we”, whether it’s a thin or a thick “we” falls apart the same way. This is the interesting thing about this theory: it always falls apart the same way. Something goes wrong in the organizational planning. We do plan well, programmatically, things turned out differently than we thought. Operational dysfunction can be solved by going back to quadrant two.

Ideological dysfunction--what is this “we” that is St. Sylvester’s Parish? How do we understand ourselves? Do we have the same understanding of ourselves? Do we have the same understanding of our eternal community? Do we have the same understanding of our relationships of the external community, the community external to us? Ideological dysfunction comes from differentiation with in the understanding of the organization that is “we”.

Ethical dysfunction...”I’m beginning to have my doubts about the pastor” or “the religious education department of the parish seems to be overly activist”. “I’m really wondering what kind of commitment Sr. so-in-so has to this place, she seems to be in some other world, than concerned about us.” Ethical dysfunction—what do we do when we have these dysfunctions? What is the solution to these dysfunctions? Because if they are not halted, if they are not dealt with, if they are denied, if the people responsible for this “we” look the other way, we’re going to get into quadrant four, we’re going to get into it one-by-one, we’re going to get into it collectively. My heart is no longer in this operation. What I hear coming from the pastor are words. What I see in this staff is a seeming unity, but it isn’t there. When we get to quadrant four, we get into a heartbreak, a breaking at the level of heart.

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This is where our text goes in. Let me put the context for our text. Paul was away from Corinth where he was instrumental in creating that *We* through his preaching of Christ crucified. He was away for 18 months, and he started getting reports about how this *We* [struggled], how thick is this *We*; how unified is this *We*. Do people in this church of Corinth, which numbered somewhere between 50 and 60 people at the time of his writing, do they realize and do they celebrate the fact that when each of them was baptized, they were baptized into a whole new identity? They belonged to Christ. Do they realize that?

And when they get together for Eucharist, is this new identity reinforced or is it diluted? He wrote that it would be better that you didn't have the Eucharist that you're having, because [you] do not represent the truth of your identity of being members of one another in the Christ phenomenon. It would be better you didn't have that. It would be better if you put a moratorium on Eucharist because you are not celebrating the truth of who you are.

That's how concerned he was about the misunderstandings we are beginning to play out in the relationships of the Corinthians, one to one another. His hope had been that something new was going to happen in Corinth, and the something new was going to transcend all the divisions in Corinth. Corinth was the most famous city in all the Mediterranean world for division...for ethnic division, for gender division, for economic division. It was the most divided city in all of the Mediterranean world..., because strife was at the core of that people. Paul's hopes were that Baptism and Eucharist would create discontinuity from the whole culture of Corinth, a discontinuity so distinct from the way people related to one another in Corinth that the rest of Corinth could say "Hey, there's something new there. There's something new in this Christian crowd. Let's go and see what this newness is because we find the relationships among the members of that little community remarkably different from the relations [we had] with one another before and the ones we have with one another in Corinth.

Paul would say, "If it hasn't got it at the moment of Eucharist it hasn't got it." If it hasn't got it at the moment of Eucharist, commitment is going to slog to a halt. And all that's going to happen with this new Christian phenomenon is just another little group, another little group that takes its place with the other little allegiances, all of the sum total of which represent sheer division in Corinth. If it hasn't got it there, it hasn't got it. If it hasn't got it in Eucharist, it hasn't got it. That was his concern. And that was his tension, that when this ritual meal is celebrated relationships are experienced anew and as discontinuous from the relationships that we had in Corinth prior to the entry of the Christ phenomenon into our city.

Operational balance The way we have decided to be a community is we'll have a potluck supper. And at the beginning of the potluck supper the bread will be blessed and broken, and at the end of the potluck supper the chalice will be taken and it will be changed, and we will receive the bread and we will receive the wine which we believe to be the body and blood of Christ. And this unity that we have and this agape meal, this potluck supper, this unity that we have will be re-experienced, and we will know again

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what it means to be in Christ as a people, as a WE, as His body, as one, as Him in Corinth.

Then operationally, something happened. They decided to put the blessing of the bread in the back of the meal with the blessing of the wine, with the consecration of the wine. So what? So those, who knew they could, could come early. And who were they? They were the leisure class, so they could take the materials for the potluck supper they would take this to this event. They would begin to eat and begin to drink, and then other people would drift in. The last of whom were the slaves. The population of Corinth went from the freed rich, to the middle class, the poorest of the poor, the slaves. That was the population of the Corinthian church. So the last people to come to the meal, because they had to take care of their masters and make sure that their masters were fed back in their own houses, in their own mansions, were the slaves.

And what did they see when they got there? And what did they hear when they got there? They saw people burping, well fed, some of whom having had too much to drink. And what are we going to do now? We are going to celebrate the Eucharist, the breaking of the body and the drinking of the blood. We are going to celebrate a unity. How, operationally, can we celebrate a unity when there are the haves and the have-nots? The have-nots and the haves are just as true at the beginning of the birth of the community as now.

In other words, this was Paul's problem: You are replicating the same divisions, the exact same divisions as before Christ event came here. And you replicate those divisions operationally. You say we are one body; you're not acting as one body; you're tolerating members of the body, and the toleration is evident because you don't wait to have this meal together.

. . . There is division in Corinth.

People in Corinth weren't saying, "There is something different going on in that house where they're celebrating some ritual." And what is that difference? They are relating to one another in ways that we've never heard of or imagined in all of Corinth.

The second dysfunction, that third point, ideological dysfunction: there were three factions in Corinth. There was the Apollos faction. Apollos was one of these intellectual giants. He had been taught by Filo of Alexandria. He had developed intellectually and rhetorically an eloquence that was unequaled by anybody in the area, and he started to follow Christ. He not only started to follow Christ, he started to name, theologically and speculatively, the meaning of this new person, the new person that is both collective, namely us and the new person that is the risen Christ. So his eloquence really attracted a certain group of people within and to the church of Corinth. Paul was afraid that there was a seductive character to his eloquence, and that people entered the Christ phenomenon at the level of ideas, at the level of thoughts.... new thoughts..... new ideas.....a theological vision. So there was the Apollos faction.

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There was the Cephas faction. They were the people who had been Jews (a certain portion of the Corinthian community had been Jews). They took Jesus to be the true Jew, the faithful Jew. And they entered the Christian phenomenon, believing that Jesus was a Super-Jew. And so if you wanted to be Christian, you had to be at least Jewish, which included circumcision and all the other things...the Law. So you had the Judaizer faction.

Then you had another faction which apparently identified with Paul. They called themselves "We Belong to Paul," as the other, "We Belong to Apollos," or "We Belong to Cephas," and this Paul crowd apparently started taking the gifts that they had experienced as a result of being baptized and exercising these gifts in a way that was divisive in the community. And so I have the gift of speaking in tongues, so when we get together I have this gift, thank you, and I will sing in tongues or pray in tongues. But Paul was concerned about what is the "We" that is being developed. So there are three different factions, ideologically different factions.

And then, finally, you had the ethical dysfunction, a third one down there on that chart. The ethical dysfunction is basically attitudinal. I tolerate you because we are in this little "We" together. I have the same relationship with the slave that I had before I was baptized into Christ. I keep a distance. And the clan that is part of the Corinthian community.....my family never got along with that clan. So they're Christian now, so we will have a relationship of toleration. We will accept the fact that we are all in this phenomenon of Christ. But relationally, we will be where we were before Baptism. So the ethical dysfunction has to do with the level of relationality, the level of relationship and the attitudes that I bring to the level of relationship.

So Paul is in effect saying that the culture of Corinth, such as it was, was deeply divided and in deep antipathies of the different groups. The culture is winning the day when we come together to celebrate the Eucharist. The economic culture is winning the day when we come to celebrate Eucharist. The ethnic divisions are winning the day when we come to celebrate the Eucharist. The culture and the relationships learned in the culture are dictating to Eucharist, and I tell you we should stop celebrating until we understand what we're doing.

But weren't Greeks celebrating in union with Jesus? So when I receive the body and drink of the cup, I am in union with Christ Jesus. And can I allow this union with Christ Jesus to be the be-all and the end-all of this coming together? And Paul is saying, No you can't. You can't because this Jesus who you're so happy to receive, this Jesus from which chalice you are so happy to drink is not simply a verticalized individual risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father. This Jesus is a horizontal reality, namely the person beside you and the person at the other table.

This is really a call to a whole new identity, a new identity which supposedly was forged at the moment of Baptism. A new identity that would be deepened experientially with each Eucharist, so that the WE became tangible and became tangible in how I relate to you and whether I relate to you. A radically new identity that I am a member of a body

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bigger than myself. I am a member in need of what flows from the other members. And they are in need of what flows from me. And if there is not this mutuality at the level of membership then you misunderstood the Christ phenomenon. There is no “THEM” there.

If every Eucharist does not experientially celebrate the fact that there is no “THEM” there, Paul would say take a break. Cut the crap. Look again. Look again at what? At what I have received and I have handed on to you. What have I received and handed on to you, that is meant to be celebrated by you: that the night on which He died He took His own identity and He broke it, like bread broken. And when you receive the broken bread you receive not only union with Him, but you receive the mission to be broken for one another. And when you receive the cup you do not simply receive the communion in the blood of Christ, you receive the mission to be poured out for one another. And if you don’t know that, you don’t know what you’re doing. And until you know that, stop doing it.

Why? Because the Christ in us could only take its place with the athletic clubs, with the food clubs, all the clubs in Corinth takes its place. They happen to be Catholics, that’s why they go to the Catholic Mass. So they go to the Catholic Mass to have an experience of the individuated Risen Christ through the bread and the wine. And Paul would say that he can’t make it. That’s not going to do it. That’s not what it’s all about. Why would he say that? 1 Corinthians 12: the one and the same spirit it produces something. And what does it produce? The spirit Christ. It has produced a body. And this body has many parts, and though the many parts of the body are multiple, it’s one body.

And then this incredible statement in the Greek, that just as the body is composed of many members but remains one body, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός (outos kai ho Kristus), so also is the Christ—now many membered! {cf. 1Cor 12:12} Thus is the Christ. That’s what we don’t believe, and we still don’t believe. We don’t believe that the identity of Christ is an US.... is a WE, is: each of the parishes. It took Paul about eight years before he could name what community is in Christ. And you can see the evolution of this trying to name it. He finally nails it, he nails the definition of community. What is the definition of community? Christ! *One Corinthians 12:12*: the definition of community is the Christ.

And he would go further, when you come together my biggest complaint is, you’re not discerning the body, and I want to say something to you, Paul would say. Because you’re not discerning the body in its vertical and horizontal dimension, you are eating and drinking unworthily.

This is a radical statement, and all the tensions we have in a parish, and we have a lot of tensions: ideological tensions, operational tensions, we have ethical tensions, we have a lot of them—Paul is saying, “Go back to the tradition the night before He died.” Undercut the level of tensions by going back to quadrant one and get it straight. What was the meaning of the breaking of the bread? For my identity! You are no longer an *I*; you’re no longer an *I*; you’re a member of a greater whole; you’re a member of a “*WE*,” a member of a body, collectively—you are *the Christ*. If you don’t understand that, you don’t understand yourself!

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Or, the more likely possibility is that the Christ allegiance is one of multiple allegiances, and the multiple allegiances--each of them--dilute your allegiance to Christ. Each dilutes your understanding of your real identity. This is a parable statement Paul is making.

If the reverence that I show to the consecrated species, the bread and wine, does not have a prolongation into the reverence that I show for you and you and you, I have misunderstood Eucharist.

The sacralizing of the species without the rendering of reverence to the members who are part of this same Christ reality is the way we get by as contemporary American Catholics—with being very happy to be Catholic Christians without the cost, the cost in relationship, tangible relationship, to other members of the body. Stop sacralizing the species, if you don't render the same judgment about sacredness to the members of the body of Christ with whom you have celebrated.

When I grew up there was a conflict with triumphalism over the one true church. I grew up in a Protestant town where we were the only Catholic family and I secretly knew that they were wrong, and we were right. Then I evolved, and we all evolved, from an ecclesiastical triumphalism to the more likely present mood, an ecclesiastical embarrassment or disdain. We know the spots and the wrinkles on the body of Christ, and if we don't know them, we haven't read the papers. And we know them too well.

There is a third possibility, it seems to me. The third possibility is latent in what Paul is saying. Look at the people with whom I receive the Eucharist, and see whether or not when the Eucharistic minister says, "The Body of Christ," I can honestly say, *We are*. I can honestly say *I am* because *He is*. And *we are* because *He is*. This is dangerous food, this Eucharist. We are to become what we eat.

And what we eat is bread broken, and the bread is broken for one another, starting with those with whom we eat this dangerous food. If I go to Eucharist for the experience of an interior unity with Christ, that is only half the truth. That is only half the truth. I go to Eucharist for an experience of union with more of the risen Christ, the individuated Christ person. There is to be a trans-substantiation at the level of consciousness, a trans-substantiation at the level of attitude, a trans-substantiation of mind-vision of who you are that I am receiving this with.

Eucharist is not a commodity to be consumed, separated from those who are consumed by it, namely us who receive it. This is to be the beginning of a new covenant experienced in the world as new, and discontinuous with the other forms of relationships we have. We spend a lot of time concerned about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. We haven't spent enough time on the real presence of Christ through us and our behavior as a result of this Christ.

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Eucharist is its own reason for being; it's an act of praise and thanksgiving to God. But it is also meant to function beyond this, and beyond this event, each allegiance that crowds our identities, and every allegiance takes a piece of my heart. And if the Christ, and the parish and the Church take a piece of my heart rather than relativizing and organizing all the other allegiances, I've not yet received Eucharist.

I hesitate to say this, but I think there are no divine afterthoughts; there is not another plan that God has in store, there is not another Christ that is to come, other than the same Christ who came. And what will His judgment be when He comes? His judgment will be whether or not you celebrated who He is. And who is He? Whatever you did or didn't do to your partner, to the concelebrants of the Eucharist, you did or didn't do to me.

I wonder whether we have ever celebrated Eucharist, honest-to-God celebration of Eucharist, the way Paul is talking about it here. Are we discerning the body, the body, or are we just discerning the sacred species? What are we celebrating when we do Eucharist? Are we forging a new "WE," or are we retaining all the little hostilities, antipathies, and tensions which go unmolested through each Eucharist?

Do this. This is. This is bread broken. Do this. Do what? Do what? Do all of this, all this entailed in the relationship with each person to the right and to your left. It is not a question of being nice. It is a question of understanding, Who am I? What happened to this I and was baptized in this We? What happened to this I? Has it ever emptied itself for the sake of its brother and sister?

All this suggests that the issue of the parish and the church and the issue of identity can all be reexamined in this one text, which I haven't even read to you but is in your notes, this one text, this is a powerful text. The power of this text—I don't even think you've begun to appreciate. It's a revolution at the level of identity, it's also a revolution at the level of imagination. If I could imagine myself as being a part of a greater whole, into which whole and for which whole Christ died for the sake of the world. This Bread is my pledge for the life of the world. Thank you.