

Five Affirmations on the Eucharist as Sacrifice (1994)

At the forty-first meeting of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the United States of America (ARC/USA), on January 6, 1994, having in mind the significant agreement on the eucharist represented by The Final Report of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission and responding to the request in the Vatican Response to the ARCIC I Final Report for clarification, we wish as the official representatives of our two Churches in the United States to make together the following affirmations:

We affirm that in the eucharist the Church, doing what Christ commanded his apostles to do at the Last Supper, makes present the sacrifice of Calvary. We understand this to mean that when the Church is gathered in worship, it is empowered by the Holy Spirit to make Christ present and to receive all the benefits of his sacrifice.

We affirm that God has given the eucharist to the Churches a means through which all the atoning work of Christ on the cross is proclaimed and made present with all its effects in the life of the Church. His work includes ‘that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world’ (Cf. Art. 31 BCP [USA], p. 874). Thus the propitiatory effect of Christ’s one sacrifice applies in the eucharistic celebration to both the living and the dead, including a particular dead person.

We affirm that Christ in the eucharist makes himself present sacramentally and truly when under the species of bread and wine these earthy realities are changed into the reality of his body and blood. In English the terms substance, substantial, and substantially have such physical and material overtones that we, adhering to The Final Report, have substituted the word truly for the word substantially in the clarification request by the Vatican Response. However, we affirm the reality of the change by consecration as being independent of the subjective disposition of the worshipers.

Both our Churches affirm that after the eucharistic celebration the body and blood of Christ may be reserved for the communion of the sick, ‘or of others who for weighty cause could not be present at the celebration’ (BCP, pp. 408-409). Although the American Book of Common Prayer directs that any consecrated bread and wine not reserved for this purpose should be consumed at the end of the service, American Episcopalians recognize that many of their own Church members practice the adoration of Christ in the reserved sacrament. We acknowledge this practice as an extension of the worship of Jesus Christ present at the eucharistic celebration.

We affirm that only a validly ordained priest can be the minister who, in the person of Christ, brings into being the sacrament of the eucharist and offers sacramentally the redemptive sacrifice of Christ which God offers us.

As the Vatican Response had already recorded the notable progress toward consensus represented by The Final Report in the respect of eucharistic doctrine, in the light of these five affirmations

ARC/USA records its conclusions that the eucharist as sacrifice is not an issue that divides our two Churches.

January 6, 1994