

John Navone  
Gregorian University, Rome

## The Sacramental Dimension of the Recital of Community's Faith

The community of faith throughout the entire biblical tradition has been called to tell its story to others. Jesus affirms that those who love him will keep his word (*Jn.* 14:24); that the Spirit, whom the Father will send in his name, will teach us the meaning of his story and remind us of it (*Jn.* 14:26). Loving him means telling his story and making it our own through the gift of his Spirit. In fact, communicating his Spirit in word and deed is telling his story and giving witness to him (*Jn.* 16:27). Loving Jesus means keeping his commandment to love one another (*Jn.* 14:15); it means sharing with others what God has done for us and is continuing to do for us through the gift of his Spirit, which motivates and impels our telling of God's goodness. Telling the story is sharing that goodness in compliance with the commandment (or law) to love one another. The *lex narrandi* is the obligation of the community of faith to tell of God's wonderful deeds; it demands that the goodness of his deeds be shared and communicated.

The Psalmist summons the community of faith to tell this story because of its responsibility for the faith and hope of future generations:

"Listen to this Law, my people . . .  
What we have heard and known for ourselves,  
and what our ancestors have told us,  
must not be withheld from their descendants,  
but be handed on by us to the next generation,  
that is: the titles of God, his power  
and the miracles he has done.  
When he issued the decrees for Jacob  
and instituted a Law in Israel,  
he gave our ancestors strict orders  
to teach it to their children;  
the next generation was to learn it,  
and children still to be born,

and these in their turn were to tell their own children  
so that they too would put their confidence in God,  
never forgetting God's achievements,  
and always keeping his commandments (*Ps* 78:1-7).

We must tell the story of God's saving deeds because we are responsible for communicating our basic faith and hope to others.<sup>1</sup> We are summoned to collaborate with God in sustaining and cultivating the basic faith and hope of the community that he is creating from generation to generation. We are called to be with God in doing what he is doing for others. We share in and benefit from the good that God does throughout the entire tissue of historical relationships that constitute the life of the community that he calls into being and sustains from generation to generation. Our personal reality is identified and interwoven with that of his community; it transcends the temporal limits of our individual life story. Telling our story of God, therefore, reflects the maturity of the believer who accepts a responsibility for the past and the present and the future of the community that God is creating and sustaining.<sup>2</sup> Such maturity entails the believer's vision of a universal story under God. This is not the private insight of a solitary individual, but the shared vision of a believing community which even now experiences a goodness unbounded by spatial or temporal limits. The community of faith must tell their story of their God who is actively encompassing their lives within a goodness—his own life—that he bestows on all generations.

The Psalmist expresses the conviction of his community of faith that God is speaking and active in our lives and, therefore, we must listen and tell of it for the benefit of others. In terms of the Parable of the Sower, God speaks his word that our lives might communicate his true goodness for others. The ground upon which the seed of his word falls embraces our intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social life.

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1. Roger Hornsby, Dean of the Classics Department of the University of Iowa, affirmed in a lecture given at the Gregorian University in the Spring of 1983 that learning to take responsibility for the past and present and future of one's people was Virgil's criterion of human maturity in the *Aeneid*. Virgil believed that the best incentive to moral behaviour was the conviction that we are part of a story which begins before us and goes on after us, but whose outcome we may influence. We are responsible for playing our part well.
  2. See J. Navone and Thomas Cooper, *Tellers of the Word* (New York: Le Jacq, 1981) where responsibility for our story telling is the dominant theme.

The quality of our lives at these levels is a precondition for our effectively having anything of his true goodness to communicate to others. By our listening to God the story that our lives are telling are his story, communicating the true and lived goodness of his word, preparing the ground of other lives for its fruitful reception. Only those who have put their confidence in God are truly telling his story and communicating its goodness to others so that they, too, might do likewise. Accepting God's grace and demand for an authentically intrapersonal and interpersonal and social life is our most effective way of telling others of God's true meaning and goodness for them.

Israel's listening and telling is its appropriate response to God's speaking and acting. This is the way Israel understands its experience of being with God and of knowing who he is and what he is doing. Israel exists on the presupposition that God is actively communicating with and caring for his people. The psalmist's injunction to tell the story of God's wonderful deeds is a summons to listen. The Shema, the prayer that is Israel's confession of faith, also begins with the same injunction, "Listen, O Israel" (*Dt.* 5:4). There is no communion with God or story of God apart from listening to what he is communicating at every level within the particularities of our story. He speaks, and acts as the ultimate context of our human story's past and present and future. The universal story, together with every human life story, is God's primary word. The stories of God told by prophets, priests, evangelists, and others are his secondary word. Our failure to listen to God distorts our life stories by ignoring their proper context, the measure of their meaning. Just as listening is remembering to tell our story of God, our failing to listen is our forgetting or distorting it:

they had not kept God's covenant,  
they refused to follow his Law;  
they had forgotten his achievements,  
the marvels he had shown them (*Ps* 78:10-11).

Our listening and telling relationship to God's speaking and acting is that of a people sharing a common commitment to God; in fact, it is our life and identity as a people from generation to generation. God's speaking and our responding constitutes our life as a people. Only a people that hears God's "I love you" (*Jer* 31:2; *Mal* 1:2) can reply "Love God, all you devout" (*Ps* 31:24; *Ps* 97:10), or "I am his" (*Sg* 2:16). Our lived experience that God is caring for us as a people grounds our conviction that we are responsible to God for our lives as

a people. We know in the events of our life as a people a caring God who is summoning us to be with him in caring for ourselves and one another as a people. Because we have life as belonging to a people we are being truly responsible to God for ourselves as individuals only when we are being responsible to him for the people through and in whom we live. God is truly served by those who serve his people. The psalmist concludes by recalling David as a model of such service-

Choosing David as his servant . . .  
to pasture his people Jacob  
and Israel his heritage:  
who did this with unselfish care  
and led them with a sensitive hand (*Ps* 78:70, 72).

Israel confessed her faith characteristically by recounting the story of her life: "We were once slaves of the mightiest emperor of the day, but Yahweh, the God of our fathers, brought us up out of Egypt and led us into a good and broad land." Israel began her confession of faith by pointing to the historical situation of distress and limitation from which, in a wholly unexpected and humanly impossible way, deliverance was granted. In that situation, the Exodus from Egypt—the reality of God was unveiled. What we mean by God, Israel declares, is this Reality who opened a way into the future when there was no way. This is the Reality whom we have encountered in our history and who with boundless compassion deals with us in the concrete situations of our historical journey. This God, whose name is Yahweh, is not remote and inaccessible; he is the God who makes himself present, who is "with us" (*Immanuel*). As the prophet Hosea put it, he is "the Holy One in your midst" (*Hos* 11:9). Whether his coming to his people is experienced as judgement or mercy, the saving effect is the same: he opens a way into the future when noway exists. He gives his people a new possibility—in grace. He inspires confidence:

O Israel, hope in Yahweh!  
For with Yahweh there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plenteous redemption (*Ps* 130:7).

One of the basic differences between Israel's psalms and the songs of her neighbours is that Israel turned primarily to her own historical experience to proclaim the reality of God to the world.<sup>3</sup> Israel affirms

3. See Bernhard W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).

that God's people was created out of the "nothingness of historical oblivion, the chaos of meaningless oppression." Therefore, Yahweh is praised as Israel's maker: "let us kneel before Yahweh, our maker!" (*Ps* 95:6).

In Israel's great festivals the story of the formation of the people was told and retold as a drama in which the present generation was involved. The worshippers acknowledged that the whole story had happened for them. They were participants in the Exodus story; they recognized its meaning for the here and now. Accordingly, the faithful Israelite confessed that "Yahweh delivered us from Egypt, guided *us* through the great and terrible wilderness, and led *us* into the land of the new beginning." Even today the Pass over ritual contains the reminder that believing Jews should confess that the Lord brought *them* out of Egypt. In the Christian community the believer also confesses that the whole story, which comes to its completion in Jesus Christ, has happened "for me" and "for us." The community of faith has a shared history; it confesses its faith by retelling its story of God's action with his people in the history of Israel because it believes that the same God is operative with the same saving purpose in the historical particularities of our lives here and now. The community of faith knows God in its life story. It attributes that story to the mercy of God and praises Him for it.

Israel's psalms praise Yahweh by recounting his deeds of salvation (e.g. *Pss* 66:5-7; 71:15-16; 75:1; 77:11-15; 98:1-3; 107:31-32; 145:4-6). One group of psalms recite Yahweh's mighty deeds in Israel's history to teach us the meaning of our history. They retell the story of the people of God to show God's faithfulness, even when his people have erred and strayed from his ways to follow the designs and desires of their own hearts. Psalm 105 presents an historical summary paralleling the Pentateuch from Genesis 12 on. Psalm 106 offers a similar summary recited in a penitential mood. A summary which carries the story up to the selection of David and the choice of Mount Zion (Jerusalem) is found in Psalm 78. Psalm 135 gives an historical summary which includes a reference to Yahweh's power as creator (vss 5-7). Psalm 136 presents an antiphonal summary of Yahweh's great deeds, beginning with creation. These five psalms recapitulate the unfolding drama of God's dealings with his people from the very beginning of Israel's history to the entrance into the promised land and—in the case of Psalm 78—as far as the raising up of David as the Anointed One. They re-

cite events fundamental to Israel's self-understanding as a people and central to her knowledge of who God is. Psalms 135 and 136 associate the story of God's deeds on behalf of Israel with his actions as creator in the beginning. This is true especially of Psalm 136, an historical recitation of God's mighty deeds, in which the congregation makes an antiphonal response to each affirmation: "For his steadfast love endures forever." This is Israel's way of saying that the meaning disclosed in her own historical experience unveils that which underlies the whole of human history right from the start, and indeed of the entire cosmos. The word which God speaks to Israel is the expression of his steadfast love, the same word by which the heavens and the earth were made (*Ps* 33:6-9). Israel lives as the manifestation of God's steadfast love. Its life story tells of that love; its worship proclaims it. Israel learned to hear God's word of love in the Exodus events of oppression and deliverance, humiliation and exaltation. Israel lives hearing that word in the concreteness of its life story. Israel's worship summons us to hear that same word in the historical particularities of our story. Its praise is a reflex of the prior action of God which moves his people to "seek his face" (*Ps* 27:8) within the concrete goodness of their story.

Learning to listen to the word of God within our own life story as a people is at the heart of Israel's spiritual pedagogy. The head of the household in the Jewish Passover liturgy explained the special features of the Passover meal (*Ex* 12:26) and proclaimed the outline of the story. He recalled the sparing of the houses marked with the blood of the Passover lambs and the redemption out of slavery in Egypt. At the same time he looked forward to redemption in the future, of which the redemption from Egypt was the pattern. The Messiah comes on Passover night when Israel was redeemed and would be redeemed. Memories make the future. Israel looked forward to redemption because it recalled its redemption. The prophetic tradition of Israel had proclaimed that God would send his Messiah to inaugurate a new community "for all peoples," when sorrow and death are things of the past (*Is* 25:6-8; 65:11-13; *Zeph* 1:7). The eschatological banquet of universal peace and friendship under God would be achieved by his agent, the Messiah. On the basis of the Exodus Israel looked forward to a universal liberation and peace under God. The God that Israel recalled in its present historical experience was the object, embodiment and guarantor of its ultimate hope for salvation. Israel's hope stretches beyond what the present generation experiences, rather, it embraces God's coming

in glory, his reign over a new earth, the conversion of Israel and all the nations of the earth, and the new covenant, based on the forgiveness of sins.

Israel trained its people to listen to God in its present experiences: "See how God has shown us his glory and his greatness" (*Dt* 5:24; 11:7). We must pay attention to the wonderful things that God is now doing for us: "The works of God are sublime, deserving the study of those who delight in them" (*Ps* 111:2). God is actively present in our historical experience, allowing us to celebrate the marvels that he is accomplishing for us (*Ps* 111:4). If we recognise what God is doing in our life story, we shall be grateful (*Ps* 111:1) and praise him for his mercy and tenderheartedness (*Ps* 111:4). We shall proclaim his utter reliability and saving power.

Cultic and festive joy characterizes Israel's recognition of God's saving activity in its past and present (e.g. *Ps* 32:11). Israel's thankful joy before God not only testifies to past experiences of his salvation; it also exults in his faithful dealings which are still future (cf. *Hab* 3:18) and which believers see ensured by him. Israel's rejoicing embraces the created universe which Israel summons to join in the jubilation (*Pss* 19:5; 89:12; 96:11). Even God himself rejoices in Israel's jubilation (*Is* 65:19). Under the prophets both during and after the exile, Israel's rejoicing in its God, even in wretched situations and apparently hopeless moments, broadened out to include anticipatory gratitude for final salvation and messianic joy (*Is* 61). Israel finds God throughout the entire course of its life story. It responds with exultant rejoicing over God's saving acts in its past, present and eschatological future.

The jubilation that accompanies the dramatic story of Israel finds expression in Mary's Magnificat: "my spirit exults in God my saviour" (*Lk* 1:47). Her exultant rejoicing arises from gratitude and unshakable trust in the God who has constantly helped and still is helping his people Israel. She has learned from the spiritual pedagogy of her people to recognize and to rejoice in God and what he is doing for his people throughout their entire life story. She rejoices to have been granted a place in his saving purpose for all from Abraham to his descendants for ever (*Lk* 1:55). She expresses the joy of full participation in the life story of God and his people, a story embracing every generation of humankind that has been blessed by the promise of God to Abra-

ham. Here is the joy of a people experiencing the fullness of its life story under God with all others; it is not the merely private experience of a solitary visionary or alienated individual.<sup>4</sup> Her life is one with that of all her ancestors and all future generations under God. Therefore, what she receives, they receive; and all generations shall call her blessed (*Lk* 1:48). They are blessed through her blessing no less than she is blessed through Abraham's blessing and that of all her ancestors. Mary's listening and telling of what God is speaking and doing for his people within the historical particularities of her life story benefits them just as their listening and telling benefits her; for the same God is blessing his people of every generation.

The Annunciation is an event within the story of an entire people through and with whom Mary has learned to listen to God and to tell of his saving activity: "Let what you have said be done to me" (*Lk* 1:38). Mary is the beneficiary of her ancestors' true listening and telling of their story under God. Through their fidelity to the law of listening and telling (*lex narrandi*), she has learned to recognize the same God's saving activity in her experience of the same life story and to put her confidence in him. Her Magnificat celebrates the true goodness of the law of listening and telling for all generations who shall similarly learn through her fidelity to this law to recognize God's saving activity in the past and present and future of their story and, as a consequence, put their confidence in him. The Magnificat expresses the joy of listening and telling that responsible believers know in communicating the goodness of God and his love for all. Rejoicing in listening to God's word and in telling of his saving action that all might put their confidence in him manifests the coming of his kingdom; for his kingdom is coming where his will is being done. Mary finds the joy and meaning of her life in that of a people communicating its faith and hope in God; she shares their responsibility towards God for their past and present and future of authentic listening and truthful telling of his meaning for them. Doing God's will is the joy of his people and the coming of his kingdom.

Israel's listening and telling culminates in that of Jesus. On the mount of transfiguration Jesus' disciples saw his glory and heard the voice saying to them: "Listen to him" (*Mt* 17:5; *Mk* 9:7; *Lk* 9:35).

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4. See J. Navone, *Themes of St. Luke*, ch. 7, "Joy," (Rome: Gregorian U. Press, 1970).



The shepherds' song of praise, as well as the confession of the apostles before the Sanhedrin, referred to what they had heard and seen (*Lk* 2:20; *Acts* 4:20). Jesus pronounced a blessing on the eyes and ears of those who had become witnesses of the salvation longed for by the faithful of former generations (*Mt* 13:16; *Lk* 10:23). To the disciples sent to him by the imprisoned Baptist Jesus reiterates Israel's law of listening and telling (*lex narrandi*): "Go and tell John what you hear and see" (*Mt* 11:4; *Lk* 7:22). The disciples have a responsibility for telling others about Jesus' words and saving deeds. Jesus blesses those who hear and keep his word (*Lk* 11:28). He compares the person who hears and does his word with one who builds one's house on rock (*Mt* 7:24-26). He cites the Shema or creed of Israel which declares that the Israelite was to be in daily, constant remembrance of the obligation to love God with one's whole being: "Listen, O Israel, the Lord our God is one; and you shall love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (*Mk* 12:29-30). Jesus always heard God as his Father, and as mediator told what he had heard from him (*Jn* 8:26, 40; 15:15). He hears his Father in all of Israel's life story because it is *their* story: "I tell you most solemnly, before Abraham ever was, I am" (*Jn* 8:58). Jesus affirms: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to think that he would see my Day; he saw it and was glad" (*Jn* 8:56). What Abraham saw was "from a distance" (cf. *Hb* 11:13), because he saw it in the birth of the promised Isaac (at which Abraham "laughed," in *Gn* 17:17), an event prophetic of Jesus, the ultimate meaning of his life story. Jesus claims to be the ultimate fulfilment of this promise made to Abraham; he is Isaac according to the spirit. He and his Father are the origin, ground, direction, and destiny of Israel's true life story. Consequently Jesus accuses those who reject him of having rejected Moses:

Do not imagine that I am going to accuse you before the Father:  
 you place your hopes on Moses,  
 and Moses will be your accuser.  
 If you really believed him  
 you would believe me too,  
 since it was I that he was writing about;  
 but if you refuse to believe what he wrote,  
 how can you believe what I say? (*Jn* 5:45-47)

Because there is no love of God in them (*Jn* 5:42), they are simultaneously rejecting Jesus and Moses and God, the life of Israel's true

story. Similarly, they are not Abraham's children (*Jn* 8:39). The love of God is not operative in their life story; but it is operative in the life story of Abraham and Moses and Jesus, Israel's true life story. Israel lives under the sovereignty of God's love.<sup>5</sup> That love is its life as a people, constituting its true life story. To reject that love is to reject the life that binds Abraham and Moses and Jesus within the one story of the people of God. Therefore, Jesus charges his adversaries: "If God were your father, you would love me" (*Jn* 8:42). They would be bound to Jesus by the same love that is in God and Abraham and Moses. When we are bound by that love for one another, everyone will know that we are disciples of Jesus (*Jn* 13:35) and children of Abraham in the spirit. God speaks and acts through the life of the people united under the sovereignty of his love, summoning all future generations to put their confidence in him. He speaks where his love governs the minds and hearts of his people: when the story which their life tells is that of his steadfast love from Abraham to Moses and Jesus. The unity of God's people living in his love manifests the coming of his kingdom and the accomplishment of his will. The life story of Israel, the flesh and blood of Jesus, is for all.

Jesus communicates through his listening and telling of the Father's love which is the joy of the people of God. The Father's love for Jesus is the joy of his life and of the people who share it:

As the Father has loved me,  
so I have loved you . . .  
I have told you this  
so that my own joy may be in you  
and your joy be complete (*Jn* 15:9, 11).

If we accept the gift of the reciprocal love that unites the Father and Jesus and its demand (commandments) for our loving one another as they love one another, we are the friends of Jesus:

This is my commandment:  
love one another,  
as I have loved you.  
You are my friends,  
if you do what I command you (*Jn* 15:12, 14).

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5. Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, tr. by V. Green (New York : Paulist Press, 1974), pp. 79-80, 83-84, 184, 185.

The joy of the messianic era is known in the friendship of the people whose lives are governed by the same love that unites Jesus and his Father. Jesus hears the word of the Father's love for him at the heart of his interpersonal life and communicates what he hears so that an entire people might hear that same word of grace and summons at every level of their life:

I call you friends,  
because I have made known to you  
everything I have learnt from my Father (*Jn 15:15*).

Because the joy which Jesus communicates derives from the gift of his Father's love, it cannot be taken from us (*Jn 16:22*). The Father loves us for loving his Son (*Jn 16:27*). Jesus communicates the love that is the joy of his life for the peace of the people who share it: "I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me" (*Jn 16:33*). Jesus embodies Israel's law of listening and telling for the joy and peace of his people. His fidelity to Israel's *lex narrandi* expresses both God's steadfast love for his people and the perfect response of their love for him. Jesus' life under the sovereignty of his Father's love is a shared life with a shared past and present and future. All that he is and does is willingly embraced and undertaken within and for the life of his people. He is attached to his people in every generation, past and present and future. He is gladly responsible for them, sharing the joy of his responsible life with them to the full (*Jn 17:13*), so that the love with which the Father loves him may be in them (*Jn 17:26*). His responsible love for his people takes the form of his sending to them the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father (*Jn 15:25*), who will teach them everything and remind them of all that he has said to them (*Jn 14:26*), and who will tell them of the things to come (*Jn 16:13*). Jesus, the Just One of Israel, assumes responsibility for the past and present and future life of his people. Through his gift of his Holy Spirit, Jesus enables his people to grasp the meaning of their past and present and future in the light of his Father's love for them, so that they will be forever able to put their confidence in him.

Mark's Gospel is called "The beginning of the story of how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, brought the good news to humankind" (1:1), with the implication that the story is still in the process of being told by those who accept it as their own; that the story has not yet reached its conclusion or ultimate fulfilment. The story that God has begun

in Jesus Christ and his people culminates in the fulfilment of the universal story and the resurrection of the just.

Luke's Gospel, through its frequent use of "today" (2:11; 3:22; 4:21; 12:52; 19:5, 9; 23:43), reflects the traditional concern of Israel for recognizing the grace and demand of God's community-creating and sustaining word within the historical particularities of its "today". The life story of the people for whom Jesus speaks occurs in the "today" of their hearing and communicating his word of the Father's love for all: "And all humankind shall see the salvation of God" (*Lk* 3:6; *Is* 40:5). The God whose speaking and acting is the life of his people summons all humankind, "today", to assemble with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the messianic kingdom, the new Jerusalem (e.g. *Is* 45:14-17; 49:12; *Jer* 12:15-16; *Mal* 1:11; *Ps* 106). Hearing and communicating that word of his Father's love, Jesus affirms that "Men will come from east and west, from north and south, to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God" (*Lk* 13:29). The life and story of God and his people is for all. What makes Israel a people is God's election and grace, and not mere national, natural and historical factors. Jesus affirms that *all* who hear and keep the word of God are his flesh and blood, his mother and brothers and sisters. At the Last Supper, he affirms that his life is poured out for the life of *all* humankind in the new covenant (*Mk* 14:24; *Mt* 26:28). Through the fullness of his flesh-and-blood relationships with all others God's will is being done and the universal human story is being brought to wholeness and completion. The kingdom of God does not come in an a-personal, a-social, a-historical or magical way; rather, it comes through the fullness of the crucified and risen Lord's interpersonal, social, historical and supra-historical life for all others.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus does not tell his story of God apart from his "flesh and blood," Israel. He hears and communicates all that he receives from his Father his shared present and past and future life story with his people. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Mary, in covenant loyalty to their own "flesh and blood," have heard the word of God and have faithfully kept it for Jesus.

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6. Paul Steidl-Meier, *Social Justice Ministry* (New York : Le Jacq, 1984), pp. 40-49.

Neither does the Father speak his word nor does the Son enter into the life story of humankind from outer space. Most authentically his "flesh and blood," Jesus affirms are they who hear the word of God and put it into practice. Jesus claims that anyone who does the will of his heavenly Father is his brother and sister and mother (*Mt* 12: 49-50). They are the concrete persons who share his life of hearing and doing and communicating his Father's word of love for others. Their lives tell the same story of the Father's true goodness for all others that all generations might put their hope and confidence in him. Their historical life story as a people derives from and is formed by the Father's word. They are the hearers and doers and communicators of that word of hope. They are the true "flesh and blood" of the Father's Beloved Son, a people extending from the beginning to the completion of the universal human story, through and in whom the Father summons all humankind to the fullness of that life which he alone can give.<sup>7</sup>

When Jesus tells us to take his flesh and blood that we might have eternal life, he is summoning us to participate in the fullness of his interpersonal life with God and all others for the life of the world. He is inviting us to become nourished and sustained by the Father's life in himself as an interpersonal subject communicating that life with all his true "flesh and blood." We cannot share his relationship to the Father apart from his concrete flesh-and-blood relationships with all others. His life is poured out for all flesh and blood in fulfillment of the promises made to his "flesh and blood."

Paul writes to churches which consist both of born Jews and born Gentiles, and both belong to the people of God by faith in Jesus Christ. They are children of Abraham by virtue of their faith (*Rm* 4:16-17; cf. *Gn* 17:5; *Gal* 3:7; cf. *Gn* 12:3; *Gal* 3:13-14, 26-29). The Gentiles who have come to faith in Jesus Christ have been grafted into the rich olive tree of his spiritual and historical heritage, and are supported by it (*Rm* 11:17). The Gentiles are no longer outsiders, but part of the family—the "flesh and blood" of Jesus, "where God lives in the Spirit" (*Eph* 2:19-22). Jesus Christ communicates the fullness of his life to them, making them a part of his own flesh and blood as an individual whose life story is interwoven with that of a family and a people.

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7. Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 141-142.

The Lord's Supper is a form of the *lex narrandi* in which the community of faith remembers its obligation to tell of the wonderful deeds of God on behalf of the "flesh and blood" of his beloved Son. The community celebrates the life that God is imparting to it through and in the fullness of his Son's interpersonal relationships with all others divine and human, Jew and Gentile, past and present and future. The Lord's Supper proclaims and gives thanks to God for the life that He is pouring forth into his Beloved Son in the fullness of his flesh-and-blood relationship with all others. The Lord's Supper celebrates our belonging to God as his own flesh and blood in Jesus Christ and his gift of their Holy Spirit. The interpersonal life of the Three Persons is given to us in and through the Jewish flesh and blood of the Son and his truly human life story with its shared present and past and future. The Son is not made man, as an abstract concept; he becomes this Jewish man. God-made-Jewish has Jewish flesh and blood, a Jewish biography and history of heritage, and Jewish hopes for the fulfillment of God's promises to the Jewish people. The Lord's Supper is the good news that the promise of the "new covenant" of which Jeremiah (31:31-33) and Ezekiel (36:26-28) had spoken is now fulfilled for the salvation of all (*Zech 2:11-12; 14:16*).

Jesus affirms that we must be nourished by his flesh and blood to have eternal life (*Jn 6:53-58*). He retells his people the life story of his "own flesh and blood":

I tell you most solemnly,  
it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven,  
it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven,  
the true bread;  
for the bread of God  
is that which comes down from heaven  
and gives life to the world. (*Jn 6:32-33*)

Jesus is that bread of that life which the Father gives (*Jn 6:35*). That bread is the flesh and blood of Jesus which the Father gives "for the life of the world" (*Jn 6:51*) in an all-inclusive new covenant under the sovereignty of his love. The Father is giving his life to all who accept it in the flesh and blood of his Beloved Son, in the full life story of Jesus of Nazareth and his Jewish people. Taking the flesh and blood of Jesus for eternal life means taking the promise made to Abraham and its fulfillment in Jesus and being forever sustained by the same love of God that is the life which both knew and shared as members

of a people. We are summoned to make their life ours. Jesus invites all to eat and drink with him, recalling the eschatological banquet for the unity of all humankind under the sovereignty of God's love.<sup>8</sup> Taking his flesh and blood means making his life ours by taking his heavenly Father, their Holy Spirit, his mother, his Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Moses and David and Solomon and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Hosea—all his Jewish flesh and blood, their hope and confidence in God—as our own, for our own sustenance unto eternal life. As the Father nourished and sustained Jesus through his flesh and blood, Israel, he will nourish and sustain us. Jesus sees himself as a part of a family and a people that he wants to share with all the families and peoples of the world. His life story is theirs and ours. He tells the story of his flesh and blood for the eternal life of Jew and Gentile of every generation. The Lord's Supper celebrates and proclaims the life story of God's own flesh and blood as ours for persons are interpersonal; they have a life story (intra-and interpersonal, social) and belong to a people. The story of the Lord and his Supper is truly proclaimed and celebrated by those who accept his flesh and blood, his interpersonal and shared historical reality, as the expression of the Father's love for all humankind. The story of God's saving activity within the life story of all humankind must be told by his own flesh and blood: "Do this in memory of me" (*Lk* 22:19; *1 Cor* 11:24-25). And that story is told that all humankind might put its hope and confidence in God.

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8. John Navone, *Themes of St. Luke*, ch. 1, "Banquet."