

INTRODUCTION: CHRIST THE REDEEMER



The Spring 2022 issue of *Communio* pursues the theme “Christ the Redeemer.” In his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, Pope St. John Paul II wrote that man “cannot live without love” (10), meaning that for man to find himself he must both accept Christ the Redeemer’s love and indeed “assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption” (10) by loving in return as he is loved. In sending of the Spirit of charity, God seeks to transfigure nothing less than the totality of human existence. The essays collected here testify to the way Christ heals man by gathering all that man is into his own eucharistic self-sharing for the life of world and to the glory of the Father.

José Granados, in “Christ, Redeemer of the Body and Redeemer of Love: The Proposal of Karol Wojtyła,” reflects on how God’s salvation of man includes in its completeness the body’s natural ordering toward communion. Through an interpretation of three plays by Wojtyła, Granados explores how the freedom for love given in Christ also restores man to his original reception of and responsibility for his body in relationship with others, above all as this is epitomized in the life of the family. “It must be said that a key to the redemption of the body is the movement from ‘my body’ said of objects to ‘my body’ understood in a personal way. When this happens . . . the body is understood not as a place of possession and domination but as a place of welcoming, self-gift, and surrender.”

In “Christ in Preaching and Sacrament: A Rapprochement of Catholic and Protestant Views,” **Gerhard Ludwig**

Müller engages with the view, starkly expressed by Adolf von Harnack, that sets Protestant preaching in opposition to Catholic sacramentality. As Müller argues, the Incarnate Word's teaching was oriented to and prepared the way for his saving works, and these works are themselves God's most eloquent utterance of his own goodness. The necessary unity of these two dimensions of Christ's earthly mission, furthermore, reflects our own constitution as inseparably spiritual and bodily, and this same unity is expressed accordingly in the Church's own task of mediating Christ's self-offering. "Through the Church, Christ preaches himself, doing so equally by the proclamation of the Gospel as his *words* and by the sacraments as his *deeds*."

Brant Pitre sets out to address a consequential problem in the modern reception of John's gospel in "Jesus, the Last Supper, and the Paschal Mystery: Rethinking the Date of the Last Supper in John." Many prominent exegetes have insisted that, on John's account, the Last Supper should not be understood as a celebration of the Jewish Passover, but rather as a farewell meal before Jesus enters into his Passion. Pitre disputes this interpretation by attending to the various stages of the Passover in first-century Judaism. Instead, he holds that John reaffirms the synoptic chronology of the Passion, thus preserving the theological truth that Jesus in the Last Supper is "revealing himself to be *the eschatological Passover lamb* whose sacrificial death will inaugurate the long-awaited new exodus."

John Nepil examines the relationship between the priest's office and his person in "A Miracle of Grace: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Vision of Priestly Spirituality." If the whole of the priest's vocation consists in adhering to the office he has sacramentally received, this office itself flows from and represents Christ's life-form, within which Christ humanly enacts his divine self-gift to the Father. "The priest Christ seeks is a living holocaust, one who has conformed himself subjectively to his kenotic Lord." The insuperable difference between the received office and the man who receives it, Nepil argues, comes upon the priest as a call to the humility through which alone God can draw him into Christ's own fruitful sacrifice.

In "A Catholic Spirituality of Nonaction: Rereading Hans Urs Von Balthasar with the *Daodejing*," **Joshua R. Brown** turns to the classic text of Daoism to offer a critique

of modernity's titanic activism, which, he suggests, has affinities with Balthasar's own theology of Christian discipleship. The *Daodejing* "encourages us to think of ourselves within the world of the gift, to recognize and realize our own naturalness, and thus to adopt a form of life whereby we can become friends with the world and the *dao* rather than terraform it as we envision." Brown maintains that we can glimpse the Catholic redemption and fulfillment of Daoism's "nonaction" (or superaction) through Balthasar's reflections on the totality and gratuity of loving obedience to God in Christ that is exhibited by John, Mary, and Ignatius of Loyola.

In "Henri de Lubac and the Christian Mystery of Nature and Grace," **Nicholas J. Healy Jr.** clarifies how de Lubac's understanding of man's original desire to see God upholds the integrity of human nature in its positive openness to the surpassing gift by which man is deified. Ultimately, Healy shows, this anthropological claim is rooted in fidelity to the very form of Christ's saving revelation of the Father, in which Christ at once reveals man to himself. "The ground and pattern for the original integrity and ultimate destiny of human nature is the hypostatic union of God and man in Christ."

Aaron Riches, in "*Qualcosa di Dio: The Metaphysics of Desire and Paradox of the Real*," defends de Lubac as a model of a theological approach that rightly seeks to conform itself to the reality of the mystery it contemplates. Riches presents how the weakening of Thomistic participatory metaphysics in the tradition of commentary on Aquinas gave rise to the understanding of pure nature that de Lubac opposes. In the wake of that decline, the paradoxical structure of being can be rediscovered by turning, as de Lubac does, to God revealed in flesh and blood. "The crucifixion is the sign of salvation precisely because it is the concrete sign of paradox (*signum contradicetur*) where the unity of the God-man is brought to the breaking point—but does not break."

Jacques Servais, in "Balthasar: Proponent and Beneficiary of the Thought of Ferdinand Ulrich," depicts the fructifying influence that Ulrich's philosophy had on Hans Urs von Balthasar. Offering an account of the personal and intellectual friendship between the two thinkers, Servais discusses how Balthasar found in Ulrich a Christian metaphysics

and anthropology of gift that harmonized with and pervasively enriched his own theology. “In the school of St. Ignatius, Ulrich had learned and taught the ‘principle and foundation’ of human existence: ‘recognition’ full of gratitude for the faith of being created *umsonst*, for nothing, gratuitously, by a God of love.” □

—The Editors