

# Eucharistic Preaching as Early Response to a Dual Pandemic

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**Abstract** — This paper examines the preaching at Washington National Cathedral as a response to the dual pandemic of COVID-19 and systemic racism in the United States. Drawing on research from over forty sermons from high church traditions and comparing it with analysis of sermons on Palm Sunday and Easter this paper will show how preachers in high church traditions, accustomed to preaching in the presence of eucharist, adapted their proclamation to respond to a virtual congregation and the absence of in-person communion. Then, the paper examines how Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry further develop elements of eucharistic preaching in Pentecost and Trinity Sunday sermons to respond to the murder of George Floyd. Among other things, Budde and Curry's sermons call for confession, evoke anamnesis, employ liturgical music, invite embodiment, and offer Christ as broken body and resurrected hope to target systemic racism. These sermon examples show how the theology and rhetoric of the eucharistic liturgy can be a resource for preaching that more effectively confronts the challenges of a dual pandemic.

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“When preaching occurs in the context of the eucharist, the homily is not the primary narrative but an integral part of the larger narrative of the eucharist itself”<sup>1</sup>.

“Communion tables with open Bibles on stands, empty crosses, chalices, and collection plates must never end up speaking more eloquently of God and salvation than the preachers in the pulpit and the people in the pews”<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. Introduction

What *Mary Catherine Hilkert* addresses from a Catholic, liturgical perspective, *Cleo LaRue* emphasizes from an African American preaching perspective, namely, preaching, Eucharist, and the work of the people of God are most effective when they are interconnected in the proclamation of the good news. Or, as Episcopal homiletician, *Bill Hethcock*, once said, “the spirit of celebrating the liturgy together with the people” is essential to effective preaching.<sup>3</sup> The problem is that preaching, celebrating, and doing much of anything together with the people is more of a challenge in a time of pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mary Catherine Hilkert*, *Naming Grace, Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*, New York 1997, 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Cleophus LaRue*, *Rethinking Celebration. From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching*, Louisville 2016, 72.

<sup>3</sup> *William Hethcock*, *Preaching at the Eucharist*, in: *Sewanee Theological Review* 39.2 (1996), 131–146, 139.

This paper examines how elements of eucharistic celebration can be reimagined and re-incorporated into preaching that confronts the dual pandemic of COVID-19 and systemic racism in the United States. It explores how preachers in high church traditions, accustomed to preaching in the presence of Eucharist, preach in ways that respond to a virtual congregation, to the absence of in-person communion, and to the murder of *George Floyd* as a visible reminder of the ongoing problem of systemic racism. While this is largely a descriptive project, my interest is in how eucharistic elements can be a resource for preachers to draw upon to confront the pressing needs of the church and the world today.

After defining how I mark and evaluate eucharistic preaching, I summarize data from a survey of forty-five sermons in high church traditions from mid-March to mid-April 2020 as a way of describing the change that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the Church. Next, I focus upon preaching in The Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. This Cathedral is a well-resourced and nationally important voice in the Episcopal Church and in the nation. The sermons I analyze here from Pentecost and Trinity Sunday occur during the weeks of the murder of George Floyd and protests of his murder. Following this analysis, I offer thoughts about how the sermons from the Washington National Cathedral might help preachers draw upon eucharistic elements to confront a viral pandemic and the pandemic of systemic racism.

## 2. Markers of Eucharistic Preaching

There are many different ways to define and understand Eucharist. Indeed, even the word Eucharist is not something that is universally applied in the theology and practice of different churches. I enter this conversation from a particular perspective as a Methodist, teaching at an Episcopal Seminary, and examining preaching in an Episcopal Cathedral. Among other things, this means that I am interested in how preaching (1) calls for confession, (2) evokes the *anamnesis* of God's saving acts, (3) employs liturgy and music, (4) invites the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*), (5) commissions embodiment, and (6) offers Christ as broken body and resurrected hope. While other eucharistic markers might be suggested, these six can be effectively engaged in preaching that confronts COVID-19 and systemic racism.

Further, my thinking about eucharistic preaching has been helpfully re-shaped by an understanding of the role of celebration in African American preaching. Henry Mitchell wrote that the goal of celebratory preaching "is an *experience* of the Word, which plants the Word deep in human consciousness"<sup>4</sup>. *Frank Thomas* then expanded on celebration, calling it the culmination "where a moment is created in which the remembrance of a redemptive past and/or the conviction of a liberated future transforms the events immediately experienced"<sup>5</sup>. And, recently, *Cleo LaRue* argued that celebration in African American preaching must be defined as "'ritual acts of worshipful praise' [...] that acknowledge God's greatness and power"<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> *Henry Mitchell*, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Revised Edition, Nashville 2008, 59.

<sup>5</sup> *Frank Thomas*, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching*, Cleveland 2013, 49.

<sup>6</sup> *LaRue* (note 2), 69f.

These definitions seem to offer some ways in which we might think differently about the connection between Eucharist, celebration, and preaching. They push us to move beyond matters of rhetoric or liturgical forms to preach toward doxology, eschatological liberation, and action for transformation today.

### 3. Eucharistic Preaching During the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In the Spring of 2020 as the pandemic set-in, I asked the students in my Advanced Preaching class<sup>7</sup> to examine how preachers were handling the changes that quarantine brought to worship and preaching. Together we examined forty-five sermons preached from mid-March to mid-April in high church traditions that typically celebrated the Eucharist after the sermon. This study provides a helpful baseline for understanding how preaching in these traditions was affected by COVID-19. Among other things, it found that thirty-two of the forty-five sermons were preached as part of a continuous, live-streamed service.<sup>8</sup> Thirty-one of those continuously-streamed services were held in a church sanctuary rather than in a home or other location.<sup>9</sup> Most importantly for this study, only seven sermons were followed with a Eucharistic celebration in which the participants present consumed the host. Thirty-one churches switched their liturgy to a form of Morning Prayer, thus eliminating Eucharist from the day's liturgy.<sup>10</sup> A minority – seven churches – celebrated a form of ocular Eucharist in which the regular liturgy was celebrated but no one, not even the presiding priest, communed. Thus, survey data suggests that as COVID-19 curtailed the practice of celebrating Eucharist, the majority of communities within high church traditions sought to recreate an experience of the church's corporate worship life as best they could. Because the liturgy changed, the *image* of worship in the sanctuary seems to take on more of a quasi-sacramental role as a symbol of reflection and of mediated grace for the physically distanced congregation.

A similar strategy is reflected in the content of the sermons. Researchers found that preachers drew on several eucharistic and liturgical approaches in their sermons. Preachers regularly confessed not sin so much as pain and congregational vulnerability. They invited hearers into “a new perception of hope of God's last word, despite the realities of our grief” (Neislar). Preachers also more frequently used stories, poetry, music, and images to connect hearers with the larger story. One preacher even preached from the altar with a chalice in front of him (Hartsough). At the same time, preachers proclaimed hope, embodied their words, and showed uncommon passion and energy when compared to pre-COVID norms.<sup>11</sup> All of these findings point to subtle shifts and

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<sup>7</sup> Special thanks to *John Church, David Goodpastor, Mary Hagerty, Bernie Hartsough, Gray Hodsdon, Melissa Howell, Brandon Hudson, Murdock Jones, Maribeth Manoff, Andrew McLarty, Ranie Neislar, Michelle Simmons, John Simpson, Noah Stansbury, and William Stokes.*

<sup>8</sup> Twelve sermons were recorded and mixed with other pre-recorded videos to present an entire liturgy. One sermon was audio-streamed, thus I could not determine the location of the sermon in relation to the rest of the liturgy.

<sup>9</sup> Thirteen sermons were preached outside of a church and two sermons were recorded in a way that I could not determine their location.

<sup>10</sup> Twenty-two churches held Morning Prayer or a prayer service that did not include a Eucharistic liturgy. Another nine churches included sermons within a liturgy that seemed not to include Eucharist, but because of recording and access issues, could not be verified.

<sup>11</sup> Many preachers attempted to connect their hearers more directly with the narrative of resurrection and to help them *feel* companionship with God. They sought to *evoke* grace in one's individual relationship with

added emphases in preaching that connect hearers with elements of the lost celebration of the Eucharist.

Two sermons from the Washington National Cathedral further illustrate an early-pandemic eucharistic homiletic response. These services were streamed continuously from the sanctuary. While the eucharistic liturgy was celebrated, after March 15 the Cathedral switched to ocular Eucharist combined with a prayer that emphasized the spiritual presence of Christ with the viewer.<sup>12</sup>

On Palm Sunday *Bishop Mariann Budde* preached from the pulpit of the Cathedral. Her sermon focused on the Gospel reading from the Revised Common Lectionary and addressed Christ's approach to suffering during Holy Week, combining it with the Serenity Prayer.<sup>13</sup> Budde's sermon employs five of the six markers of Eucharistic preaching. While she does not focus on the Spirit's work (#4 in our list of markers), Budde does employ a quasi-ritual of *confession*, calling listeners to "dare to name aloud" how they are hurt and scared, while also inviting them to receive a word of grace meant to offer guidance and reassurance (#1). She uses *anamnesis* to lift up Holy Week, focusing especially on Palm Sunday and the Garden of Gethsemane, as examples of serenity in the face of suffering (#2). She emphasizes the Serenity Prayer (3 x's) and invites her distanced hearers to use *prayers and liturgical elements* from Holy Week as conduits of grace (#3). She encourages her hearers to *embody* God's grace and Christ's intentional and accepting response in facing the challenges of the pandemic (#5). And, she offers Christ's broken and resurrected experience of Holy Week as a sign that God will help us through suffering (#6).

A second example of preaching during the onset of COVID-19 is *Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's* Easter Sunday Sermon. Though he preached from his office, the rest of the service was live streamed from the Washington National Cathedral. The central theme and primary moves of Curry's sermon are captured in this one run: "It may not look like Easter. It may not smell like Easter. It may not even feel like Easter, but it's Easter anyway. And trusting that, we can make it."<sup>14</sup> Curry's sermon *confesses* the fear, death, physical distance, and grief brought on by a viral pandemic (#1). He employs *anamnesis* (#2) to recount how God raises Jesus (#6) to deliver Easter hope even though it didn't feel like Easter on that first Sunday morning. Curry draws heavily on *liturgy and music* (#3). He cites *The Strife is O'er*, preaches about "a weepin' and a wailin" from the spiritual, *Soon-A Will Be Done*, quotes *O Love that wilt not let me go*, alludes to *God Will Take Care of You*, and concludes his sermon by singing an entire verse of *He's Got the Whole World in His*

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God and hope for our wider society. And they looked to foster an *experience* of coming before the face of the loving God (Research from *Hudson, Stansbury, and Stokes*).

<sup>12</sup> The prayer used after the consecration of the elements was, "My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen [from St. Alphonsus de Liguori, 1696–1787]."

<sup>13</sup> *Mariann Budde*, Palm Sunday Sermon, Washington National Cathedral, April 5, 2020, <https://youtu.be/PbBMjiP7LwM> [accessed July 27, 2020]. The version of the prayer *Budde* cites is the one most commonly used in AA: "God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

<sup>14</sup> *Michael Curry*, Easter Sunday Sermon, Washington National Cathedral, April 12, 2020, <https://youtu.be/IPV2KYaGO-U> [accessed July 28, 2020].

*Hands*. With this superabundance of music, Curry hopes to “express the ineffable”<sup>15</sup> and bring his congregation to experience what Howard Thurman described as the *Spirit of God* “beating out its rhythmic chant in my own spirit”<sup>16</sup> (#4). Finally, by commending the witness of the women at the tomb, Curry inculcates an *embodied* response of love, determination, and hope in the face of the deathly challenge of COVID-19 (#5).

Like Curry and Budde’s preaching, many of these early sermons seek to offer consolation and assurance of God’s presence at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. They do not confess sin so much as name pain and invite vulnerability. They use *anamnesis*, not to recount the Lord’s Supper, but to remember the suffering and deliverance of Christ and his followers in ancient times of fear. They call listeners to embody faith, persistence, and the love of Christ. And, and they regularly offer the *spiritual presence* of God through non-eucharistic *liturgies and music*.

Still, speaking words of comfort in times of trial should not be understood as merely pastoral. These preachers also offer prophetic witness that seeks a different future. As Budde writes elsewhere, “To speak of God’s presence and comfort in times of trial is as true to prophetic speech as is speaking the harder truths of judgment”<sup>17</sup>. In this way the preaching examined here from March and April helps lay a foundation for a another, more overt, prophetic response at Pentecost that not only grapples with COVID-19 but confronts the pandemic of systemic racism in the United States as made painfully visible in the murder of George Floyd.

#### 4. Eucharistic Preaching as Response to a Dual Pandemic

On May 25, 2020, *George Floyd* was murdered by Minneapolis police during an arrest when a white police officer knelt on Floyd’s neck for nine and a half minutes<sup>18</sup>. The murder and Floyd’s plea for his deceased mother were captured on video for the world to see. Six days later, *Presiding Bishop Michael Curry* preached a Pentecost sermon at the Washington National Cathedral. Curry’s sermon theme was “Pentecost in a pandemic,” and it was clear from the beginning that Curry was not only speaking about a viral pandemic:

We really do observe this Pentecost in the midst of a pandemic. The pandemic of COVID-19 is real. It is painful, and we pray that scientists and researchers and all of the folk who are working hard will find a way to bring this pandemic to an end. But there is another pandemic – not of the viral kind, but of the spiritual kind. It is a pandemic of the human spirit when our lives are focused on ourselves, when the self becomes the center of the world and of the universe.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *William Turner, Jr.*, The Musicality of Black Preaching, in: *Performance in Preaching. Bringing the Sermon to Life*, edited by Jana Childers and Clayton Schmit, Grand Rapids 2008, 191–210, 201.

<sup>16</sup> *Howard Thurman*, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston 1996, 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Mariann Edgar Budde*, *Gathering Up the Fragments: Preaching as Spiritual Practice*. Lima, OH 2009, 65.

<sup>18</sup> *Evan Hill/Ainara Tiefenthaler/Christiaan Triebert*, et. al., How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody, in: *New York Times*, May 31, 2020; Updated July 28, 2020:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>.

<sup>19</sup> *Michael Curry*, Pentecost Sunday Sermon, Washington National Cathedral, May 31, 2020, <https://youtu.be/mp396jzWHrs> [accessed July 29, 2020].

As his sermon develops, Curry further explains what he means by spiritual pandemic. In so doing, he calls his hearers to personal and corporate confession (#1). Curry preaches that we have too easily given into a “self-centeredness” that is the “root of evil,” leading us to despise and reject the image of God in others. And, corporately, Curry says, we have become too comfortable with a racial and cultural self-centeredness that perpetuates a system wherein George Floyd’s murder “wasn’t an isolated incident.” Here Curry’s preaching seems designed to lead his hearers to something akin to one of the eucharistic prayers of confession in the Episcopal Church: “We have denied your goodness in each other, in ourselves, and in the world you have created. We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf”<sup>20</sup>. Curry even offers a word of absolution that points to Jesus’s unselfish, sacrificial death for others.

While developing his call to confession, Curry narrates Black suffering as cruciform (#6). He cites *Martin Luther King, Jr.* Then, in a powerful homiletical run, he names many who have died because of racist violence: “It happened to Breonna Taylor on March 13<sup>th</sup> in Kentucky. It happened to Ahmaud Arbury on February 23<sup>rd</sup> in Georgia. And need I mention Melissa Ventura, Paul Castaway, Sandra Bland, Eric Gardner, Michael Brown, Traveon Martin?” Curry calls this America’s long running “painful path.” With this litany of grief, Curry names what might also be called an American *via dolorosa* imposed by white supremacy onto Black people for centuries.

Bracketing all of this is an *anemnetic* narration of Christ’s suffering of injustice and violence (#2). After connecting Jesus’s life with Black experience, Curry preaches, “There is a part of us that just wants to throw up our hands and in the words of the Psalm cry ‘How long? How long, O Lord? How long?’” The goal here is not merely lament or memory. Curry intends for his hearers to feel Christ standing in solidarity with those in suffering. Curry’s preaching echoes James Cone’s “redemptive faith” in “God’s presence in Jesus’ solidarity with the oppressed [...] that God snatches victory out of defeat, life out of death, and hope out of despair”<sup>21</sup>. Curry wants to evoke a Black liberation theology that empowers perseverance with faith and hope.

Finally, Curry supports his call for cruciform embodiment (#5) with the use of the spiritual, “There is a Balm in Gilead”. Curry cites this song five times throughout his preaching (#3). On the one hand, the spiritual serves as a kind of *Sanctus* that leads the people to celebrate and to invite God’s power and might at work in the world. “There really is a balm” Curry says, for self-centeredness and systemic racism and violence. On the other hand, Curry uses the spiritual as an *Epiclesis* – a way of invoking the Spirit to fall upon the gifts of God and upon the people (#4). This is especially clear near the end of his sermon where Curry twice cites another verse of the spiritual that says, “Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my life’s in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.” Curry takes this as testimony to how the Spirit can transform us in our weakness to embody God’s love and to work, sacrifice, and protest for God’s way of life in this world.

Following Curry’s sermon, on Monday, June 1, 2020, police and National Guard troops dressed in riot gear tear gassed peaceful protestors in front of St. John’s Episcopal Church

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<sup>20</sup> Enriching Our Worship 1. Morning and Evening Prayer, The Great Litany, The Holy Eucharist. New York 1998, 19.

<sup>21</sup> James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY 2011, 150.

in Washington, D.C. so that President Trump could use the church for an unauthorized photo opportunity.<sup>22</sup> As Bishop of the Diocese of Washington, *Mariann Budde* immediately released a statement denouncing these actions.<sup>23</sup> Six days later she preached on Trinity Sunday at the Washington National Cathedral.

Budde's sermon holds together the call to confession of white supremacy (#1) with a celebration of Black Americans working for freedom and truth. She calls out individualism in American religious culture. She corrects the church's attempts to avoid building the kingdom of God on earth, directly names white supremacy as sin, and puts the onus on white members of the congregation to "fix our race problem."

Throughout her sermon, Budde engages in an *anamnetic* celebration (#2) of the gift of Black Americans who both name the problem of racism and work for truth and freedom. Budde begins by citing an article from the "1619 Project" by *Nikole Hannah-Jones*<sup>24</sup> who argues that without Black Americans fighting for democracy there would be no real democracy in the United States. Budde also quotes *Otis Moss III*, who diagnoses America as suffering from viral COVID-19 and racist Confederate-1619<sup>25</sup>. She credits Kelly Brown Douglas for her insights on how crisis can be a *kairos* moment of opportunity.<sup>26</sup> And, Budde thanks her Black colleagues and friends for calling white Christians to both do the work and to breathe in the Spirit of God.

By focusing on *kairos*, Budde preaches about a different understanding of liturgical time (#3). It is a "crucible" time, a testing time, a challenging time. But, it is also a hopeful time of possibility.<sup>27</sup> As Budde preaches, "we might actually have an opportunity to change some things in our country and in our world that have been crying out for change for a very long time – think of that possibility. What if the time is now?" Here Budde plays with liturgical time to invite her congregation to embody (#5) the salvific transformation that God has worked in the past and seeks to work in this moment. She preaches, "*Kairos*

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<sup>22</sup> *Egan Millard*, Outraged Episcopal leaders condemn tear-gassing clergy, protesters for Trump photo op at Washington church, in: Episcopal News Service, June 2, 2020:

<https://www.episcopalnewservice.org/2020/06/02/episcopal-leaders-express-outrage-condemn-tear-gassing-protesters-for-trump-photo-op-at-washington-church/>.

<sup>23</sup> *Budde* said, "Let me be clear: The president just used a Bible, the most sacred text of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and one of the churches of my diocese without permission as a backdrop for a message antithetical to the teachings of Jesus and everything that our churches stand for" (Jeanine Santucci, "I am outraged": DC bishop denounces Trump's church visit after police clear protesters with tear gas," in: USA Today, July 2, 2020:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/06/01/mariann-edgar-budde-slams-trump-church-visit-after-george-floyd-protesters-tear-gassed/5313842002/>).

<sup>24</sup> *Nikole Hannah-Jones*, Our founding ideals of liberty and equality were false when they were written. Black Americans fought to make them true. Without this struggle, America would have no democracy at all, in: The New York Times Magazine, August 18, 2019, 14–22:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>.

<sup>25</sup> *Otis Moss III*, The Cross and the Lynching Tree. A Requiem for Ahmaud Arbery, sermon held at: Trinity Church, Chicago, IL, May 17, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6985UG0Z3k>.

<sup>26</sup> *Kelly Brown Douglas/Liz Theoharis*, In this Kairos Time, Will We Embody Church?, in: Sojourners, March 26, 2020, <https://sojo.net/articles/kairos-time-will-we-embody-church>.

<sup>27</sup> Here she follows *Kelly Brown Douglas* and *Liz Theoharis* who write: As South African clergy and theologians said in their 1985 Kairos Document, this is for us a, "moment of grace and opportunity, [a] time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action" (ibid).

risers from chaos that is pregnant with the presence and the possibilities of God. So, dare with me, those of you who are people of faith ...”

Still, Budde does not entirely ignore the fact that it is Trinity Sunday. Rather, she uses this liturgical occasion to remember and celebrate the liberating work of the Trinity as the resource for her diocese to draw from in their work for justice. Budde gives thanks that God’s initial and ongoing work in creation establishes the essential good nature of humans and the world. She remembers God’s response to human brokenness in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus<sup>28</sup> (#6). And she celebrates how the Spirit is being poured out in this moment (#4). For example, as her sermon closes Budde proclaims:

The creator God is busy creating a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus is right where we’d expect him to be, and the Spirit is blowing through our land. The only question you and I need to answer is ‘Where are we?’ As for us in this house, in this cathedral, in this diocese, we will serve our creating, liberating, life-giving God. And we will show up after the cameras have gone, after the crowds disperse. We will continue the hard work of justice. Amen.

With this homiletical move Budde mirrors movements within the Eucharistic liturgy, from Father to Son to Spirit. She even echoes the commissioning prayer after communion that asks God to “send us out to do the work ...”<sup>29</sup>. In these ways, Budde draws upon the Eucharist not as a liturgical illustration or a spiritual symbol, but as the theological narrative for confronting this moment where dual pandemics require honest confession, genuine community, and the transforming grace of God.

## 5. Summary and Questions for Further Reflection

I began this paper by underscoring the important interconnection of preaching, Eucharist, and the work of the people. An astute reader may have noticed, however, that even while largely agreeing, Hilkert and LaRue argue from different sides of the coin. Hilkert, a Catholic scholar, emphasizes the importance of the Eucharist over preaching. LaRue, an African American homiletician, argues that preaching must be more eloquent than communion. This difference in emphasis points to an ongoing debate about what element of liturgy should be valued more by the Church.

One of the interesting things that this study of sermons suggests is that, at least at the Washington National Cathedral, the experience of the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism has blurred the hard line between preaching and Eucharistic celebration. The preaching of Mariann Budde and Michael Curry demonstrate how

**the rite of confession** can help the preacher name their own grief and the congregation’s pain in the face of COVID-19. Confession can also be used in preaching to confront racism and systems of white supremacy.

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<sup>28</sup> *Budde* preaches, “For Christians, Jesus is God’s definitive response to the brokenness of it all and the brokenness in us – God’s being in human form, walking with us, suffering, dying alongside us, forgiving us for all the ways we fall short of the goodness for which we were born, and through his example and in his power teaching us how to love.”

<sup>29</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, New York 1978, 366.



Budde and Curry show how the preacher can employ *anamnesis* to encourage resolve, acceptance, and even hope in the face of viral outbreaks. And, the preacher can use remembrance to describe God's victory over violent injustice in Christ and through the witness of Black Americans.

Budde and Curry illustrate how **liturgy and music** can offer the preacher a means of leading the people into a transformative and spiritual experience of God even when they cannot worship together, physically. And, they show how the preacher can use songs, prayers, and liturgical time as resources for naming the presence of God, empowering God's people for the work of liberation.

Budde and Curry show how **invoking the Spirit** can enable preachers to transform suffering by revealing God's loving presence. And, they point to ways the preacher can use *epiclesis* to highlight God pouring out grace that makes it possible to change even a painful 400-year long path of racism.

Budde and Curry show how the preacher can **call for embodiment** of love during a pandemic – one that is fed spiritually by Christ's serenity during Holy Week or by the persistence of the women at the tomb. And, they show that involvement in protest and the hard work of justice can feed the bodies of preacher and people with the Living Word.

Budde and Curry invite the preacher to **lift up Christ broken and raised** at Easter and in our pandemic-fueled gardens of Gethsemane. And, they proclaim the body of Christ broken in Black suffering. The blood of Christ poured out to heal individual and systemic brokenness.

In short, the preaching of Budde and Curry shows that the preacher can use elements of the Eucharist in preaching because the Eucharist preaches. I have focused on only six markers of eucharistic preaching, but many more could be named in Methodist and Episcopal traditions, not to mention the insights and opportunities other Christian traditions would add.

In this time of COVID-19, which has killed, sickened, and physically separated so many people, and in this time of heightened awareness of the pandemic of racism in America, which has led a nation to grapple with its history and long for change, we could use a homiletic that does more than wait for the Eucharist or ignore the Eucharist completely. This moment calls for a word that brings together a body of people to love and serve God's way in the world, a word that gives thanks for God's redeeming work in the past, one that offers God's real and saving presence today, and one that invokes God's outpouring of the Spirit for a resurrected and transformed future. To make it plain: especially in this time of dual pandemic we could use a little more Eucharist in our preaching.

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