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## The Eucharist in the Sermons on Corpus Christi of Milicius de Cremsir<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The nature of the reform movement of the fourteenth century in Bohemia is puzzling to the minds of many scholars. What were its aims or its themes? What is the connection between these developments and the ones around Hus and the later Utraquist movement? Are we able to define the programme that Milicius of Cremsir, Matthias of Janov, Tomáš of Štitné and others were advocating? Is there any comprehensive programme at all, or is their work a multi-faceted enterprise that they were developing without a clear understanding of where they were aiming? Did they belong to one ideologically or theologically defined movement? And, if we suppose a more-or-less united movement, how should we evaluate the differences in work, method or audience between the several representatives of that reform movement? Which is the most useful paradigm to use to study and understand the second half of the fourteenth century in Bohemia?

The era during which historians saw the events of that period in the light of national identity and nationalist ideology are almost gone, except for some echoes here and there.<sup>2</sup> To understand the period in terms of social classes and their struggle is something that fortunately has ebbed away as well. The destruction of the dominance of political ideologies opened the way for more religious and theological notions in the study of the period in question, though without forgetting social dimensions. Some, like David R. Holeton, stress the liturgical elements in the reform practise of Milicius, Matthias and others. Frequent communion, lay participation and the *vita communis* are key words in that concept. Recently, Zdeněk V. David in his book on Utraquism<sup>3</sup> put this perspective in the framework of three steps: the first step was the moral and administrative reform of the church which was then extended to a second, liturgical, reform – frequent communion; in the third, and final, step, the work of Jan Hus laid emphasis on the role and the rights of the individual as the subject of the reform.<sup>4</sup> This sequence of development is associated with Konrad Waldhauser and Milicius of Cremsir for the first phase, with Milicius and Matthias of Janov for the second, and Hus for the third part.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a response to the request of my distinguished colleague and friend David R. Holeton. Through our courses on the Bohemian Reformation that we teach together at the Protestant Theological Faculty, we find ourselves in a dialogue on the nature of the Bohemian reform movement of the fourteenth century. I dedicate this article to David, as he challenged me to put this on paper.

<sup>2</sup> An example of this is to be found the recent book of Martin Wernisch, *Husitství, raně reformační příběh* (Brno, 2003). Here, while claiming to present the contemporary state of discussion and research on the Bohemian Reformation, the autor focuses solely on the debate in Czech circles and literature and ignores the contribution and views on the topic from all sources other than those of Czech provenience.

<sup>3</sup> Zdeněk V. David, *Finding the Middle Way. The Utraquists' Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther* (Washington, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> David, *Finding the Middle Way* 19 ff.

David Holeton developed the same concept more extensively.<sup>5</sup> For him, the most fundamental experience of the “Jerusalem” community founded by Milicius was frequent communion. Holeton refers here to the sermon on Corpus Christi in the postil *Gratiae Dei*, a fruit of the work of Milicius. Then a theological, academic debate on this experience was started by Matthias of Janov, which was subsequently popularised by the lay theologian Tomáš of Štitný. Finally, the concept got its ecclesiastical approbation from archbishop Jan of Jenštejn, which completed the aim and status of the movement for frequent communion. Therefore, above all, frequent communion is to be seen as the key for the reform movement in fourteenth century Bohemia.

In my study about Milicius I offered an additional dimension, namely the one of the *predicatio* as a means to reform or convert the church.<sup>6</sup> Milicius was fascinated by the power of the word as a means of bringing change to the world. It is the main weapon against the power of evil as it is to be found in the lack of discipline in the church and the radical disorder of society. His understanding of preaching brought him to regard it as a separate office in the church, with preachers holding their own mandate. Their role is to distinguish between good and evil, which makes them representatives of the eschatological age. Milicius’ other activities in his community are then a result of his work as a preacher and his view on preaching as bringing about reform.

In this perspective, Milicius was a part of the preaching movement that had its roots in the twelfth century and which became increasingly important for the spirituality of the late Middle Ages. Large numbers of different types of preachers were travelling around Europe and mobilizing crowds by their charismatic words. Some had the status and popularity similar to that of a pop star in the twenty-first century. All of it contributed to a more concrete message addressed to believers, who were taught more and more about the character and consequences of the Christian faith. Milicius’ idea of the preacher as the key to the reform of both church and society is a product of this movement and, in a sense, is principally responsible for its reception in Bohemia.

In this paper I will elaborate on the relationship between the concepts of frequent communion and reform through preaching. Is it possible to integrate the two, or are they opposed to one another? To answer that question I focus on the two sermons which Milicius wrote for the feast of Corpus Christi. The first one is from *Abortivus*, a collection of sermons that I date between 1363 and 1365, i.e. the first years after Milicius’ conversion and his appearance as a preacher in Prague. The second one is from *Gratiae Dei*, a postil of some seven years later (1371-72), which is the period of the foundation of the “Jerusalem” community and its centre in the Old Town of Prague.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Sermo de Corpore Christi of *Abortivus***

In 1363 Milicius experienced a dramatic change of life, as a result of which he quit his engagements at the court of the Emperor Charles IV. This conversion, which seems to have been communicated to and accepted well by both archbishop Arnošt of Pardubice and by Charles IV, stood at the beginning of his work as a preacher in some of Prague’s

<sup>5</sup> David R. Holeton, “The Bohemian Eucharistic Movement in its European Context,” BRRP 1 (1996) 23-47.

<sup>6</sup> Peter C. A. Morée, *Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia, The life and ideas of Milicius de Chremsir (d. 1374) and his significance in the historiography of Bohemia* (Heršpice, 1999); see also *ibid.*, “The Role of the Preacher According to Milicius de Chremsir,” BRRP 3 (2000) 35-48.

<sup>7</sup> For the sermon from *Abortivus* I use Prague, National Library MS. I D 37 ff. 131ab-134aa and for the sermon from *Gratiae Dei* Prague, National Library MS. XII D 1 ff. 21b-24b. For more on the datation of the postils see my *Preaching* 99 ff.

churches. He became a colleague of another famous preacher of the time, Conrad Waldhauser. For Milicius, preaching became the main instrument to enforce reform in the church in which he identified the corruption of the clergy as a sign of the end of time, when all things would be judged.

In this first period, Milicius produced the sermon collection entitled *Abortivus*. Sermons in this postil are scholastic in form, which means that Milicius is using what was for his time a modern form which was considered in learned circles the most popular form of sermon. Here, because of its structure, the sermon tends towards preaching on themes rather than explaining and exploring biblical texts.<sup>8</sup>

The structure of the sermon on Corpus Christi takes the following form:

Text

*Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum, misericors et miserator Dominus, escam dedit timentibus se* [Ps. 110 (111):4-5.]

Prothema

[Citations from Augustine and Ambrose]

Divisio I

*Memoria sacramenti commendatur:*

- *primo, ex principali et antiqua ordinis dignitate,*  
[Citation from Ambrose]
- *secundo, ex figurata et eam apparente veritate,*  
[Citations from Ambrose and Urban IV]
- *tercio, ex prodiga divinorum numerum largitate.*  
[Citation from Gregory the Great]

Divisio II

- *Primo divinorum operum renovatio admirabilis et stupenda et hoc ibi “memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum.”*  
[Citation from Bernard of Clairvaux]
- *Secundo misericordium Dei visceris memoratio amabiliter diligenda et hoc “misericors et miserator Deus.”*  
[Citations from Urban IV and Ambrose]
- *Tertio arenarum cordium refectio cordialiter amplectenda et hoc ibi “estam dedit timentibus se.”*  
[Citations from Augustine and Ambrose]

In *Abortivus* Milicius preaches on the text from Ps. 110 (111):4-5: “He has caused his wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides food for those who fear him.”

He starts his sermon in *Abortivus* with the usual *prothema*, a kind of introduction to the prime addressee of his (written) sermon, i.e. the preacher who will be using the sermon as a model for his own sermon. The *prothema* basically introduces the theme of the sermon. The food that the Lord gives to us, Milicius says, is sweet, because it satisfies our mental state. But Milicius is not yet referring to the Eucharist. This food signifies the word of God, which leads us in life. It is like the manna that God’s people received in the

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the genre of *sermo* and *homilia*, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1974).

desert. But those who do not listen to the word of God, are ungrateful and full of disgust. They are a warning so that we shall savour the good taste of the word.<sup>9</sup>

Milicius then quotes the text again and gives the first threefold division: *memoria sacramenti commendatur* (the memory of the sacrament is recommended)

- *primo, ex principali et antiqua ordinis dignitate*  
(because of the dignity of the beginning and from the old order)
- *secundo, ex figurata et eam apparente veritate*  
(because of the prefigured truth and its appearance)
- *tercio, ex prodiga divinorum numerum largitate*  
(because of the rich liberality of divine generosity).

In *primo*, Milicius refers to Melchizedek, the ancient king of Salem (Gen. 14:17-20) who, in the theology of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb. 7:1-10) of the New Testament, became the prefiguration of Christ in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Milicius quotes from the *Tractatus de mysteriis* of St. Ambrose to give proof of this interpretation of the ancient figure, being both king and priest of “God Most High”. According to Genesis, Melchizedek offered bread and wine to Abraham when the latter was establishing his name among the kings of the cities of Canaan. Therefore for Milicius, Melchizedek is the model of the *sacerdos* in the Hebrew Bible. Under his jurisdiction or testament, the people of Israel received the manna, which is the prefiguration of the Eucharist.

In *secundo*, the sermo speaks about another *sacerdos* of the Hebrew Bible: Moses. He provided the people of Israel with water when he struck the rock. Again Milicius quotes from Ambrose, this time from the *Liber de sacramentis*. Moses saved the rebellious people by giving them the cup of living water. Therefore Moses is considered a priest.

This water of the sacrament is life-giving, Milicius continues.<sup>10</sup> He quotes from the bull of Urban IV – which Milicius calls a “letter” – concerning the institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi.<sup>11</sup> Urban’s bull uses a medicinal metaphor which recurs frequently in Milicius’ sermons: Christ’s body has the power to heal spiritually. In the third point, Milicius explains that Christ did not give this food only once but, instead, frequently.<sup>12</sup> He quotes from an Easter sermon of Gregory the Great to elaborate on this further, but no conclusion is drawn on the question of the frequent communion for the laity.

The second part of the sermon brings another division in three distinctions:

- *primo divinorum operum renovatio admirabilis et stupenda et hoc ibi “memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum”* (the renewal of God’s works is admirable and stunning);
- *secundo misericordium Dei visceris memoratio amabiliter diligenda et hoc “miserors et miserator Deus”* (the remembrance of God’s mercy is to be valued highly for the heart);

<sup>9</sup> Hoc est manna habens in se omne delectamentum et omnem saporem suavitas, hoc Deum diligentibus auditoribus bene sapit. Ingratis autem et fastidiosis divitibus qui verbum Dei audire consequenter desipit in nauseam qui tantam dulcedinorii non sentiunt et consequenter ut autem nos saporem huius sapiens degustemus. *Abortivus* f. 131ba.

<sup>10</sup> Hoc est ergo vere figuratum sacramentum et vere ostensum ymmo a nobis experimentaliter cognitum quia nobis contulit vitam. *Abortivus* f. 132aa.

<sup>11</sup> Milicius quotes from the bull *Transiturus*, promulgated by Urban IV on 8 September 1264. The document orders the annual celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday.

<sup>12</sup> Tercio hoc sacramentum in figure prominet sacramentis veteris testamenti ex prodiga divinorum numerorum largitate quia Christus non solum semel dedit sed nobis ymmo dat. *Abortivus* f. 132aa.

- tertio arentium cordium refectio cordialiter amplectenda et hoc ibi “estam dedit timentibus se” (the mending of the thirsty of heart is heartily to be welcomed).

In the first point, Milicius mainly discusses the question of transubstantiation as a symbol of the transforming power of the Eucharist. Through the sacrament a person can be corrected of his false or heretical ways. He quotes from a letter of St. Bernard to prove that in the Holy Communion we do not just receive bread and wine, but truly the body and the blood of Christ. This change is comparable to what Elisha did when he purified the bitter water of the well in Jericho and turned it into sweet water again (II Kings 2:19 ff.). A human being can experience the same type of conversion while he is still outwardly affected by the bitterness of sin but, inwardly, he is converted by God’s Spirit. To Milicius, the doctrine of the transubstantiation is therefore a necessary act of faith because it enables and explains the essence of conversion as he himself had experienced it just a few years earlier. In the body of Christ the entire world is changed, even if we do not see it on the exterior.

The second focus quotes largely from the Bull of Urban IV and from St. Ambrose’s commentary on the tenth chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews. The first defines the word *memoria*, the remembrance which is a central dimension of the Eucharist, which cannot be experienced without proper penitence. According to Milicius, if we are unwilling to do penance, we are unworthy to eat of the body of Christ. The citation from Ambrose points towards the power that the sacrament has against the devil.

The third distinction discusses the circumstances under which one is unworthy to receive communion. Here, Milicius simply lists the seven deadly sins: pride, covetousness, lust, envy, anger, gluttony and sloth. It is not the only occasion that the deadly sins are mentioned in the postil *Abortivus* as the source of a dysfunctional spiritual life. In the sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, Milicius uses the same list to show which sins prevent the preacher from achieving success with his work.<sup>13</sup>

The proud will meet the fate of the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abi’hu, who offered unholy fire to the Lord, after which they died by the fire of Gehenna (Lev. 10:1 ff). They lacked the humility needed to come before God. A sermon of St. Augustine on a passage on humility from John’s Gospel is quoted.

The covetous are like Judas who gave his soul to Satan yet still received the sacrament. He drank judgment upon himself. Again, St. Augustine is quoted, this time on Ps. 142.

The lustful are not allowed to receive communion either. They are like David, who asked the priest Ahimelech for the holy bread of the tabernacle in Nob (1 Sam 21:1 ff). But because he and his men were living in celibacy, they were allowed to receive the bread.<sup>14</sup> The conclusion is that sexual desire distracts one from focusing on the important things. Again Augustine is quoted to give further substance to the argument.

The envious and angry are to be excluded because they harm the unity of the body of Christ. They do not live in love and communion with their fellow Christians. They do not have the love and moderate nature needed to foster the brotherly unity of the church community.

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<sup>13</sup> Morée, *Preaching* 163.

<sup>14</sup> Si iste a propriis uxoribus abstinebant sequituri vulnam istius sacramenti, quanto magis ab alienis uxoribus et talis a propriis est abstinendum ubi ipsa veritas sumitur corpus et sanguinis domini. *Abortivus* f.132aa.

The gluttonous are also to be prevented from receiving the Eucharist. Only those that come fasting are prepared for the spiritual medicine – like the people of Israel in the desert awaiting the manna. They sinned greatly when they turned away from God to other gods because they could wait no longer.

Finally, the slothful are unworthy, because they do not possess the necessary humility. They only pretend to do penance, but do it without sincere faith. These are the weak and ill who are criticized by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11,30). Milicius connects this with a short citation from St. Ambrose (*Sermo 7 de Sacramentis*) calling for daily communion, because only in that way can we obtain the necessary medicine for our souls. Milicius does not elaborate on the idea of daily communion here. He only concludes his sermon by saying that we can enjoy the venerable sacrament frequently “in eius memoriam passionis.”

The *Sermo de Corpore Christi* from *Abortivus* is mainly a doctrinal and moral sermon. It addresses questions of the prefiguration of the Eucharist in the Old Testament, the character of the species of the sacrament and of how to prepare oneself for it. It is aimed at preachers who, in their work as preachers, have the same “sacramental work” as do priests in case of the sacrament. The sermon does not discuss the question of the frequency of receiving communion, because that question is beyond the scope of *Abortivus*. *Abortivus* is meant as a guide for preaching and therefore has a different *Sitz im Leben* than that of *Gratiae Dei*. When he was writing *Abortivus*, Milicius did not have a large community around him, but stood only at the beginning of his work as a preacher. While he may have attracted some followers or students, at this moment in his life he had no active community gathered around himself. Therefore, the questions and answers found in *Abortivus* are of a general nature. The sermon on Corpus Christi addresses some issues that are associated with the Eucharist as such and, therefore, have to be mentioned. These issues do not arise from the situation of Milicius’ life, something we will find in *Gratiae Dei*. That postil gives us a very different perspective so that, when we now turn to that postil, we turn not only a page but we also enter a different period in the life of Milicius.

### **The Sermo de Corpore Christi of *Gratiae Dei***

The years of the genesis of the sermon collection *Gratiae Dei* belong to the best in Milicius’ life and work. After more than eight years of intensive activity preaching and spreading his views not only in Prague, but also in Rome – where Milicius went twice to convince the pope about the necessity of reform – the preacher entered a phase in his life that clearly bore the fruits of his previous hard work. The group of his students and followers he had gathered became more stabile and assumed the structure of a functioning religious community. Moreover, not only members of the clergy and theology students from the university joined this community, but also people with very different pasts were able to integrate into it. Former prostitutes who had changed their lives because of Milicius’ preaching found a place among the more traditionally “religious” followers of the charismatic preacher and participated in the *vita communis*. Milicius’ concept of conversion and the evangelical life was capable of transcending the boundary between clergy and laity by bringing them together in one community as a sign of the new life in an eschatological light. He called this community where boundaries fell “Jerusalem” – the place of the new life in God’s Kingdom according to the book of Revelation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For more on this see my *Preaching* 27 ff. or the article by David Mengel, “A Monk, a Preacher, and a Jesuit: Making the Life of Milíč,” BRRP 5 [herein].

*Gratiae Dei* is a sermon collection rooted in this community. In the sermons of this postil Milicius reflects the questions and challenges of its life. Here, unlike in *Abortivus*, we are witnesses to the realities of Milicius' circle. Interestingly, *Gratiae Dei* no longer follows the scholastic structure of the sermon focussing on themes but, instead, is a collection of homilies offering explanation of and commentary on the pericope for a specific Sunday or Saint's day. In every way, this postil is more concrete – a part of real life.

Nevertheless, the homily on Corpus Christi in *Gratiae Dei* is an exception compared to most of the other sermons found in the collection. It uses a combination of the two classical types of sermon – the *sermo* and the *homilia* – that is, both the thematic approach and the textual commentary. The reason for this is rather obvious. The scholastic *sermo* better enables the discussion of a specific theme (connected to the text) and, here, Milicius uses this structure to focus on one specific topic: frequent communion.

Structure

Text:

*Caro mea vere est cibus, et sanguis meus vere est potus.*

[Milicius quotes only the incipit John 6:56, but the homily is on vv. 56-58]

Prothema

[Citations from John Chrysostom]

V. 56: *Caro mea vere est cibus*

[On Testamentum or Last Will]

V. 57: *Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet et ego in eo.*

*Hic notanda sunt tria*

- *Primo an sepe vel cottidie iste cibus sit manducandus.*
- *Secundo reprehenduntur hii qui ipsium raro manducant.*
- *Tercio notanda sint per que quis se ipsum probat ad digne manducandum hunc cibum, ut quisque videat au maneat in Christo et Christus in eo.*

*Primo*

[Citations from the *Glossa ordinaria* and Thomas Aquinas]

[On frequent or daily communion]

*Secundo*

[Citations from John Chrysostom]

[On taking communion rarely]

Vs. 58: *Sicut misit me vivens pater et ego vivo propter patrem et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me.*

[On participation in Christ's nature]

[Citation from Bernard of Clairvaux]

*Tercio*

[On the question who is worthy]

Vs. 59 a: *Hic est panis qui de celo descendit, non sicut manducaverunt patres vestri manna in deserto et mortui sunt.*

[On the incorruptible sacrament]

Vs. 59 b: *Qui manducat hunc panem vivet in eternum.*

[On the lay chalice]

[On salvation through the sacrament]

[Citations from Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Peter Damian]

The text of the sermon is that of John 6:56 (For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed), but the sermon also discusses the verses 56 to 58.

The homily opens with a protheme which puts the theme of Christ's body and blood in a soteriological light. It speaks about the *testamentum*, the will spoken about in the Letter to the Hebrew (9: 15). This will is the sacrifice that Christ made in his death. By pouring out his blood he liberates us from primal sin and eternal death. A will grants the heritage to the heirs. Here the Kingdom of Heaven is the heritage, given to those that are worthy. By accepting the new will or testament – which Milicius here calls the *predicatio evangelii* – we achieve the eternal heritage.<sup>16</sup>

Like in the *prothema* to the sermon in *Abortivus*, Milicius again connects the theme of his sermon to preaching and the preacher since this part of the sermon is addressed specifically to the preacher using the collection of sermons in his own sermon preparation.

Then the main corpus of the homily begins. First it discusses, as in *Abortivus*, the question of Christ's presence in the bread and wine. He is present in the sacrament of the altar, not only in his divinity but also in his humanity. With it we taste him not only figuratively, but also *realiter*.<sup>17</sup> His body and blood feed the entire human being and resurrect him in soul and in body. This will last eternally, as the following verse (57) says: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."

Here Milicius introduces the scholastic sermon structure to discuss the first main issue of the Eucharist – frequent communion. He presents a threefold division:

- Primo an sepe vel cottidie iste cibus sit manducandus.  
[Whether or not this food must be eaten often or daily]
- Secundo reprehenduntur hii qui ipsium raro manducant.  
[Those who eat rarely must be refuted]
- Tercio notanda sint per que quis se ipsum probat ad digne manducandum hunc cibum, ut quisque videat au maneat in Christo et Christus in eo.  
[One must examine oneself as to whether he is worthy of eating this food, that he will abide in Christ and Christ in him]

In the first part Milicius presents his arguments mainly by means of citations. He quotes from the *Glossa ordinaria* on 1 Corinthians 11 concerning unworthy eating and drinking of the bread and wine, which means invoking a judgment upon oneself. Those who are worthy, consider themselves unworthy, like Zacchaeus or the centurion in their encounter with Christ. Both said that they were unworthy that Christ should come under their roof and, therefore, he came. As in the desert, where the people received manna daily, so too, Christians must receive the Body of Christ daily or frequently.

A second quotation on daily communion comes from Thomas Aquinas who presents an important argument in its support. Food is needed every day to restore our

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<sup>16</sup> Nemo ergo a peccato et morte liberari potest nec ad eterna hereditatem pervenire, nisi testamentum novum id est predicationem evangelii suscipiat, et in eo vivat usque ad mortem. *Gratiae Dei* 21b.

<sup>17</sup> In hoc ergo sacramento altaris non solum est divinitas Christi sed etiam eius humanitas, secundum veritatem carnis, ut ergo totum hominem se ostendat nutrire non figuraliter nec significative, sed realiter. *Gratiae Dei* 21b.



body from the effects of hard work. Moreover, the only way to protect ourselves sufficiently against desire is by reception of the Eucharist.

Then Milicius comes to the question of what brings us to daily communion and what keeps us from it. Two things are required to receive the Eucharist. First of all, it is the desire to be joined with Christ – which is the love for Christ. Secondly, it is the honour for the sacrament – which is the fear for the Lord. For the first reason, one would receive communion daily, for the second, one would refrain from it.<sup>18</sup> Milicius is clearly in favour of daily communion, for which he brings some arguments from Augustine. One should not reject the daily medicine against sin. Moreover, it is also a part of the Lord's Prayer: "Give us our daily bread," which must also be applied to the Eucharist.

In reference to the second point – that of avoiding frequent communion – Milicius cites John Chrysostom who, in his Commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews, sets some rules for the frequency of reception. Regular communion is necessary for everyone but, if someone is not able to receive for a longer period of time (like monks *in heremo*), he must ask the bishop for permission. The maximum period for not receiving is forty days.

Through a number of short citations from different writings by St. Augustine, Milicius is able to prove that frequent communion is a matter of salvation. It is Milicius' conclusion that we must eat and drink the body and blood of Christ either regularly or daily in order to be satisfied in eternity. He who does not receive communion regularly, is excluding himself from the unity of the faith. "There are those that rarely abide in the Lord – receiving communion rarely or only once a year." This is something against the rule of the church. Those who do not taking communion annually (at the very least) are, according to law, unclean, because only through communion can sin be limited or suppressed. Therefore, good are those that communicate often with a pure heart and a life without blame, be they lay persons or clergy. Frequent communion is a sign of a good Christian life, because in this way a believer is in unity with the source of eternal life.<sup>19</sup>

Christ lives in unity with the Father, as the text of the gospel continues. Milicius paraphrases the text, interpreting it in the light of the incarnation. Christ, in his unity with the Father, is both true God and true man. Therefore, if someone eats the body of Christ he is incorporated in him through faith and love. As raindrops falling into the river become one water with it so, too, he who participates in the Eucharist is incorporated into the divinity of Christ.<sup>20</sup> Bitter drops are turned into sweet water and, likewise, his bitterness is

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<sup>18</sup> In recipiente sacramentum ista duo requiruntur. Primo desiderium coniunctionis ad Christum quod facit amor. Et secundo requiritur reverentia sacramenti que ad domini timoris pertinet. Primum incitat ad frequentationem huius sacramenti cottidiana, sed secundum retrahit. Ideo si aliquis experimentaliter cognosceret ex cottidiana supplicatione, fervore amoris augeri et reverentiam non minui, talis deberet cottidie communicare. Si autem sentiat reverentiam minui et fervore non multum augeri deberet intradum abstinere, ut cum maiori reverentia et devotione post modum accederet. *Gratie Dei* 22a.

<sup>19</sup> Si ergo panis noster cottidianus est corpus Christi et sanguinis eius, ideo sive cottidie sive sepe sumere illum debemus, donec illo eternaliter satiemur. Qui enim coniungimur ei in presenti in gratia per participium sacramenti illic coniungemur ei in gloria. Ubi est participium et eterna fruitio deitatis, et hoc fit et hic per fidei unionem, et hic et ibi per intimam caritatem. (..) Boni autem qui sepe communicant puro corde et vita irreprehensibili, sive sint layci sive clerici, quia premissum est de omni christiano. *Gratie Dei* 22b.

<sup>20</sup> Milicius would have encountered this theme daily as he celebrated the Eucharist. At the preparation of the chalice, when water is mixed with the wine, he would have prayed: Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti, et mirabilius reformasti: da nobis quesumus per huius aquae et vini misterium, eius divinitatis esse consortes, qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps, Iesus Christus Filius tuus, Dominus noster: Qui tecum vivit et regnat... Bernard Botte and Christine Mohrmann, *L'Ordinaire de la messe. Texte critique, traduction et études* (Paris-Louvain, 1953) 68.

changed into sweetness. He must approach this *terribile sacramentum* with love and the desire to be in Christ, otherwise he will abide dead in himself.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, Milicius comes to the third section of his division, which is the question of who is worthy of approaching to the sacrament. Unlike *Abortivus*, where Milicius solved this question by excluding those that live in deadly sin, here he gives four brief positive characteristics. In the first place, he who listens devoutly to the word of God is worthy. Secondly, so is he who immediately applies that word to good works. The third criterion is whether or not someone disposes himself to refrain from sin in the future and fourthly, whether someone grieves for his sins by true penitence. He who did not receive forgiveness for his sins from a priest is not ready to receive communion.<sup>22</sup>

In the next part, commenting on the verse “He who eats this bread will live for ever” (6:58), Milicius comes to the question of the lay chalice. First he says that the bread is eternal and incorruptible and that his blood saves us from death:

What I say about the blood of Christ, I also say about the bread or the body of Christ. Whoever takes the body of Christ under the species of bread, eats it with the blood, because the body of Christ is not without blood, but lives with the blood. Likewise whoever drinks the blood from the chalice, eats the body as well, because the blood of Christ is not living without his body, but lives in the body. Under both species therefore, i.e. both bread and wine, the whole Christ is alive. Lay persons, therefore, receive the blood of Christ together with the body and in the body of Christ. That is, the blood of Christ is communicated under the species of bread. In accordance with this, the sacrament of the chalice is not given to them, so as to prevent the possibility that, when a large number are receiving communion, something of Christ’s blood being easily wasted.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Milicius represents the classical mediaeval position on the lay chalice. For him there is no connection between the urge for frequent or even daily communion (apparently also for lay persons, though he does not speak about them explicitly) and the chalice for all believers.

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<sup>21</sup> Et sicut stille pluviales intrantes in fontem vel fluum incorporantur ei et una aqua efficiuntur cum eo, sic nos Domini Christo incorporamur, manente substantia nostra bona in nobis induimus eius participium deitatis. Sicut amare stille intrantes in flumen vel fontem perdunt suam amaritudinem et assumunt fontis dulcedinem, sic nostra amaritudo in divinam dulcedinem convertitur, non natura sed participio gratie in presenti et glorie in futuro. Oportet ergo accedentes ad hoc terribile sacramentum habere amorem et desiderium in se dissolvi et esse in Christo, quod qui non facit ficte accedit et sic non incorporatur vite, sed manet mortuus in seipso, non remonens impedimentum omnis peccati mortali. *Gratiae Dei* 23a.

<sup>22</sup> Primo cum quis verba dei devote audit, ut Iohannis VIII, qui ex deo est, verba dei audit. Secundo cum quis promptum se ad operandum bene invennit, quia probatio delectionis exhibitio est operis ut dicit Gregorius. Tercio cum quis a peccatis abstinendi in futurum proponitum habet. Quarto cum de peccatis dolet quia in hiis vera penitentia secundum Gregorium consistit. Si aliquis per huius signa facta diligenti discussione sue consciencie, quamvis forte non sufficienti ad communionem denote accedat aliquo peccato mortali in ipso remanente, quod eius conscientia preterfugiat non peccat. *Gratiae Dei* f. 23a.

<sup>23</sup> Quidquid autem dico de sanguinem hoc dico de pane sive carne Christi. Quicumque enim suscipit corpus Christi sub specie panis, ille sumit cum sanguine, quia corpus Christi non est sine sanguine, sed vivit cum sanguine. Item qui bibit sanguinem de calice, sumit illum cum corpore, quia sanguis Christi non vivit sine corpore, sed vivit in corpore. Sub utraque enim specie videlicet panis et vini est totus Christus. Layci ergo sumunt simul cum corpore et in corpore Christi sanguinem eius. Propter hoc enim non datur eis sacramentum de calice ne cum multitudo communicat defacili aliquid de Christi sanguine effundatur, hic ergo panis sine sanguine quia mortuos vivificat sumendus est ab eis qui in quocumque mortali peccato rei sunt. *Gratiae Dei* f. 23a.

In the last part of his sermon Milicius comes back to his main point, namely that the sacrament of the altar has a saving power. Here he does not compare the sacrament to a medicine but, rather, to a preventative of sin or to food that we need to survive. Again, he strongly warns against taking communion while continuing in a sinful life. Here he speaks explicitly to priests, using a citation from a letter of Peter Damian which strongly condemns those who pretend to be members of Christ but who continue in their sinful ways. They are members of Antichrist, like the sons of Aaron, the two priests who were offering wrongfully. Like them, God will crush such hypocrites.

For the last time, Milicius stresses the soteriological dimension of the Eucharist. Like the people of Israel who crossed the Red Sea and the river Jordan, we may also cross the Red Sea of Christ's precious blood with a pure heart so that we will be cleansed of all sin.<sup>24</sup>

The sermon in *Gratiae Dei* addresses concrete questions of the practise of the Eucharist in Milicius' "Jerusalem" community. The main theme is the mediation of salvation that is present in the species of the Eucharist. Through the Eucharist we participate in Christ's deity, is Milicius' answer. From there he answers the questions "how often?" and "who?" From the space allotted and the structure of the sermon it is obvious that the question of the frequency eucharistic reception – which was totally missing in *Abortivus* – was an important issue in the community. From the sermon one gets the impression that daily communion was not generally accepted at this moment among Milicius' readers. Hesitation or criticism seems to be wide-spread. Milicius must convince his audience by using authorities such as Augustine or Thomas Aquinas to demonstrate that not taking communion rarely but, on the contrary, frequently or even daily, must be the rule.

Deriving from the discussion of frequency, Milicius must answer the question of who is worthy to receive communion. Here it is significant that the sermon does not give a list of sins preventing reception of communion but, rather, approaches the issue from the affirmative side. In the circumstances of a living community this means that Milicius is instructing his people on how to envision the life of a community in which frequent communion constitutes an inseparable part. One can no longer answer the question of whether an individual is properly prepared receive the sacrament on an annual basis but, instead, the question is asked as to how frequent communion is embedded in the spiritual life of the community. On that point Milicius gives some insight into the priorities of his community. To receive communion means to listen to the word of God, to act on it accordingly, and to be of firm resolve to refrain from the sins of the past and to repent of them. In other words, to be a full member of "Jerusalem," a community with a profound eschatological dimension where societal boundaries are crossed, means to attend the preaching (where the word of God is exposed), to change one's life without reservation in the light of hearing the word and to leave the sinful ways of the past. This is not an abstract theological statement but a deeply pastoral approach in a context in which not only the clergy but also lay members of society are present. Of this latter group, many in their former occupations represented the decay of the time – either as victims or as

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<sup>24</sup> O karissimi filii mundanum, hoc fonte inestimabilis castitate, bibite sanguinem mundissimum, qui nobis celum vadibile fecit. Quem admodum enim iudei vadarunt per mare rubrum et iordanem et mundati sunt ab immundiciis egipciorum et aliarum gentium, sic nos puro corde vadare debemus per mare rubrum Christi sanguinis preciosi, ut mundemur ab omnibus peccatis. *Gratiae Dei* f. 24b.

actors. Frequent communion thus becomes a sign of the new life as a part of the community.

It is interesting that, while addressing the question at the heart of the “Jerusalem” community, Milicius does not mention other more doctrinal notions. The topos of transsubstantiation, which constituted a part of almost any writing on the Eucharist in the Middle Ages – we found it in the postil *Abortivus* – is lacking in *Gratiae Dei*.

The differences between the rather doctrinal sermon of *Abortivus* and the clearly pastoral homily of *Gratiae Dei* reveal an important development in the work of Milicius. When he started as a preacher in 1363, his main focus was to enhance the moral standards in the church, beginning with the clergy, but including the lay society as well. Therefore, in *Abortivus*, the postil from the early years of his work, he stressed doctrinal issues that had to be respected and implemented in the life of the church and of society. Necessarily, these sermons have an abstract, moralist nature and do not discuss issues representing new directions in spirituality and theology. The emphasis is on reform as a process of cleansing additions that distract people from the real substance of faith. In this concept, frequent communion is not included as it was at this time beyond the scope of Milicius’ work, but the stress is on *predicatio* as a means for reform.

In the course of the years after 1363, Milicius’ moral reform preaching engendered a new situation, creating a community of followers drawn from a variety of social strata. *Predicatio* appears as a force not only to eliminate unnecessary accretions and corruption in the ranks of the clergy, but also as a creative power that gives birth to a community with a strong eschatological nature. “Jerusalem” is then the result and consequence of Milicius’ preaching – something which might have even surprised the preacher himself. In this new situation it is not enough just to stress moral purity, because new dynamics begin to play a role. In the new community the borders of society are crossed as both religious and lay people are its members. The *predicatio* gives birth to a new spirituality – unintentionally it seems, but then also wholeheartedly – for which frequent communion becomes the symbol.

In this sense, frequent communion is the fruit of the *predicatio*. The reforms understood by Milicius as the aim of the *predicatio* resulted in a strong focus on the community, where both lay people and clergy lived together. Frequent communion must be understood as a feature of the new community life which had been initiated by the preaching practise. Frequent communion is a consequence of a concept of reform where evangelical life according to the gospel has the priority – in contrast with the institutional church with its emphasis on differences in competence.

Milicius’ community does not turn into an utopian community where societal distinctions are denied. As the nature of renewal and conversion is reflected in the understanding of the Eucharist, so are the limitations of the new community’s life as well. The chalice remains the domain of the clergy and lay people are not entitled to receive it (although they receive its benefits). For Milicius, this border must be respected. At the same time, the mere fact that the topic as such appears in the homily in *Gratiae Dei* indicates that this border is no longer taken for granted. The dynamics of the process which started with the preaching of moral reform and which found its expression and consequence in frequent communion have already challenged the rationale for the *communio sub una*.