

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Kathy Taormina, SFO  
NAFRA Youth/Young Adult Chair  
[kltsfo@frontiernet.net](mailto:kltsfo@frontiernet.net)  
952-997-2243

*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."  
Gandhi*

You may have seen this quote on a billboard or a bumper sticker, but have you really ever thought about its impact on your own life?

We all want change to occur; as a matter-of-fact, we expect it! But most of the time we expect other things, or people, to be the ones to change. If only **he** would act differently; if only **my child** would try harder; if only **she** would understand me; if only...

How many times have we turned our statements around and questioned ourselves? If **I** acted in a more loving way maybe he would also; if **I** had more patience to listen to my youth's needs maybe they could succeed; if **I** tried to see her point of view maybe we could come to a mutual agreement. I was told at an early age by a wise Gypsy Grandma that "we are the only person whom we can truly change," but as I grew older, I seemed to have forgotten that statement and started expecting change to come from without, instead of within myself.

Eucharist has the power to change us, but the change has to

come from within. It comes from within our hearts and within our minds. We are transformed by the loving power of a God who offers himself to us through the Eucharist, if we are willing to be transformed. But, once transformed, we must go out and offer that transforming power of the Eucharist to others.

How do we do that? By changing our own attitudes and living in solidarity with others, changes will occur. It may not be the others or the situation that will change, but it may be our understanding or our attitudes that change. Changes may come in very surprising ways.

Recently we engaged in the **H2O Project** with the Franciscan Youth around the country. Many adult fraternities also took the challenge and participated. But I wonder...

Did we really change our lifestyles for just one week and drink nothing but water? Did we feel the want or urge for other beverages and still offer our funds to change the world? Did we actually feel solidarity with the poor of the world who have no clean drinking water on a daily basis? Or did we simply write another check to donate to a worthy cause? Did we keep the gift of our Eucharist to ourselves, or did we attempt to change our lives, even just for one week, and truly be Eucharist for others? Christ did not preach of the Father's kingdom while building tables and chairs in his carpentry shop.

Francis did not preach about the need for helping the lepers while lounging around in his merchant shop, selling bolts of cloth to the rich and healthy.

Do we as Secular Franciscans talk about the need to witness our

charism to the youth while sitting in our fraternity meetings that do not include any youth?

*Would youth want to be a part of our fraternities? What are the changes that must occur in our fraternities and in us before this will happen?*

- Invite youth to participate in fraternity apostolates.
- Have a Pope John Paul II night of reflection on youth, for and by the youth.

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Richard Fetkovich, SFO  
NAFRA Family Commission Member  
[fetsfo@yahoo.com](mailto:fetsfo@yahoo.com)

"Lord, look upon this sacrifice which you have given to your Church; and by your Holy Spirit, gather all who share this bread and wine into the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise." (Eucharistic Prayer IV)

Amen! What an extreme privilege we have! What an exceptional gift to be shared with all! What a tremendous mystery of faith!

While pondering the power to change, a multitude of thoughts and inspirations were experienced. This sacrificial meal brings us into communion with one another and with God in Christ. Our Lord wants to "feed us" and "enrich us" by sharing His personality. His sacrifice of self-surrender to God in submission and love should, in

turn, make our self-surrender and submission a communion of a living sacrifice of "praise." "Through Him, with Him, In Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever." "Amen." How could this not instill in us a power to change or be changed?

Regarding the family, "The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in The Holy Spirit." (Catechism of the Catholic Church). Thus, a family is more than the sum of its parts. It is a dynamic and developing system, whose members are radically interdependent. St. Paul, in his letters, captures this understanding (1Cor 12:24-26). Any change in a family, or in a family member, or in a family environment affects the life and functioning of the family.

By what means are we affirming the role of the Christian family in our world, today? What are we doing or not doing to affirm this role?

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

Pauline Cahalan, SFO  
NAFRA Work Commission Chair  
[Paulinesfo@earthlink.net](mailto:Paulinesfo@earthlink.net)

Talk about the biggest change most of us will ever witness in our lives. For me that would be the bread and wine, gifts of the earth, changing into the Body and Blood of Christ each time we are

guests at the Eucharistic Banquet. How do change, work, and the Eucharist all influence each other in our lives? It would seem there are at least two aspects of change. There is *Being*, the one who causes the change and then there is the aspect of having to accept change. The Serenity Prayer comes to mind. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Both *Being*, the one who effects the change and *being*, the one who has to accept the change, involve work. It involves the work of our minds and hearts with courage. Change is a very difficult thing for many people, especially when it involves something major that turns their life upside down. I teach first semester RN students. For these eight weeks we are doing clinical experience at a long term care transition unit. A number of the folks are transitioning from being very independent and living alone to, now, having to move into totally different living arrangements, perhaps where they won't be living alone anymore, and needing to have more people looking in on them and helping them daily. They have to effect change in their lives and they have to accept this change if they are going to enjoy life to the fullest as it is presented to them now. It is a tough struggle involving a time to grieve, letting go of the old and accepting the new with enough positive attitude to launch off on this new chapter of their life. It's tough stuff, and requires a lot of psychological work.

We live in a time when tremendous change going on all around us, all the time. Very few

things in our lives can be counted on to be the same from one year to the next. People used to work for the same company for many years and, no matter what kind of work it was, there was some routine to each work day. Employees can't count on that kind of longevity of employment anymore, with companies merging, going bankrupt, or moving to another country to find a cheaper labor force. Several years ago, I read that the average college graduate would change careers, involving returning to higher education, at least five times during their work life. The older one gets and the more family responsibilities one undertakes, the harder it is to acquire more education and training for a new field or career.

It is hard to know where to even begin to advocate, and for what, in the complex world of jobs, job training, discrimination within the employment structure, etc. There is one issue that could help many of our economically disadvantaged brothers and sisters that SFOs could get involved in. That would be the minimum wage. The federal minimum wage, \$5.15 per hour, has not been raised since 1997. Full time employment is 2,000 hours per year. So these folks work at manual labor (many holding 2 or 3 jobs), many of us wouldn't care to do and try to survive, but never get out of poverty. I don't know about you but that wouldn't be a living wage for me. I don't understand why we expect it to be for others. If minimum wage had been indexed to inflation it would now be \$8.46 but it wasn't. I've heard people say, "Well, that minimum wage was never meant for people raising families. It was for high school and college kids

when they got their first jobs.” The folks filling these positions as dishwashers, retail clerks, cleaning personnel, etc. are a number of years older than the high school and early 20s crowd. They need a decent “living wage.” God, with the grace of the Eucharist, help me to change the things I can. What is God calling you to do?

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Carolyn Colburn, SFO  
NAFRA Peace & Justice Chair  
[colburn@sonic.net](mailto:colburn@sonic.net)

The order of change is first myself and then the world. I must come first because, unless I am able to love the world and the people in it, I cannot sustain the effort required to change it.

Every one of us is surrounded by an invisible line of demarcation. Inside the line are our family and friends and others we love. The line is expandable and can be flexed out to include persons of whom we are not now aware. It expands to include others when our compassion is aroused because the experience of the other reminds us of our own feelings, often of pain. We must allow ourselves to feel our own pain in order to experience compassion.

When Francis was a rich young man, he was in dread of lepers. After he had experienced the rejection of others--in his family and among the townspeople--he was able to extend that experience

to embrace others, even more rejected than he.

The compassion of Jesus knew no limits. People called on him when their dear ones were desperately ill. However, no one sent for Jesus when the only son of the widow of Nain was dying. Jesus saw the funeral procession as he approached the town. He was moved with pity for the widow and said, “Do not weep.” Then, he returned her child to her. (Luke 7: 11-17)

We are not told that when Jesus saw the funeral procession, he thought of his own widowed mother with an only son, but it could have been that way.

Compassion comes to us when we join our experience to that of another. Then we allow our line of demarcation to expand until it includes the other.

Compassion leads to action. Those with compassion for the poor can serve the less fortunate with food, clothing and shelter. It is a mistake to think that hands-on help is all that can be done. Advocacy is a tool available to all. Poverty, debt relief, welfare reform, living wages, and redirection of national resources to serve human needs are examples of areas for our advocacy.

Something all persons can do is to see the world through the eyes of the poor. When we place the poor inside our invisible line of demarcation, we are consciously aware of them, even as we go about living our first world lives.

For example, television parades its endless advertisements. Think of the feelings of a TV viewer, especially a child, who has never had the money to buy any of these things and knows the money will never be there. That person sees the ads as often as

you do. Each time that viewer feels excluded.

When you settle down with a good book, think of the people who didn't learn to read in school. They have never had the experience of a good book. For them, this way of obtaining entertainment, information, and even a decent job is closed.

When an ache or pain causes you to make a doctor's appointment, think of all the people without health insurance who have no doctor they can call. The pain must wait till it is severe enough for the emergency room.

When you pass men standing on the street waiting for a day's work, think of crossing over on the dangerous desert route and the loneliness of being so far from home.

When you attend an abundant buffet dinner, think of the parents who ate less than they wanted today so that their children could have enough. They will do the same tomorrow.

When we see the world through the eyes of the poor, we are looking through the eyes of Christ. Now we can sustain the struggle to work for structural change.

---

### Familiar Quotations:

DON'T HURRY,  
DON'T WORRY,  
YOU'RE ONLY HERE  
FOR A SHORT VISIT.  
SO BE SURE TO STOP AND  
SMELL THE FLOWERS.  
Walter Hagen

On the whole,  
I'd rather be in Philadelphia.  
*His own epitaph...*  
W. C. Fields

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Nancy McKenna, SFO  
NAFRA Ecology Commission  
[bbb@naturestation.org](mailto:bbb@naturestation.org)

In our Rule we read “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.” (Rule 4) In Ephesians we find the words, “You must lay aside your former way of life and old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh spiritual way of thinking.” (Ephesians 4:23) St. Francis said, “Let us begin, for up until now we have done nothing.”

Change is not easy. Like a thief in the night, good intentions slip away unless we are relentless in our quest for ongoing, daily formation. But how do we accomplish this? How do we even start?

We go back to first principles: In the beginning there was God. And all things come from God.

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16). The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”<sup>1</sup> “We feed on the food of life, we constantly refresh our souls with his precious blood, as from a fountain.”<sup>2</sup> It is the Eucharist,

<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11

<sup>2</sup> Easter letter by St. Athanasius

received weekly, or even daily, that renews us as temples of the Holy Spirit.

Just as our best known saints did not become such overnight, change within us is gradual as well. Some years ago, I read an article about a rag rug weaver. She mentioned she bought her clothes by considering how they will look later as parts of a rug. “That’s ridiculous!” I thought to myself. But you know what? Now, years later, I wear only black cotton jogging pants, no other color, so that when I’m ready to make rag rugs I have raw materials that are the same color and material. Once I did not see any problems with wearing synthetic fabrics, now I wear only bio-degradable fabrics. When recycling started I heard people say, “Who washes a tin can before throwing it out?” But this is now a common part of food preparation. Earth Day, River Sweeps, National Wildflower week: these started as the action of one person. This change did not happen overnight. Indeed, it happened without much thought. Just one tiny step followed by another. And as you change yourself, the whole world changes. Not only because your perspective changes, but also because you become an example to others, and soon more will be doing as you do. Every trend starts out as a single person doing some-thing new, followed by many who have seen the value of the initial example.

Franciscans are called to be people of action as well as contemplation. Not only are we called to revise ourselves, we are called to make a difference in the world. We are called to rebuild the Church. In Francis’ words, “preach the gospel, use words

only if necessary” tell us how to be in the world. It is our *example* that is to show the gospel message to others. Small steps, almost i-perceptible steps at first. But you will see the change. First in yourself, then in the world.

“In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and is our food for the journey, and he enables us to become, for everyone, witnesses of hope. If, in the presence of this mystery, reason experiences its limits, the heart, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, clearly sees the response that is demanded, and bows low in adoration and unbounded love”<sup>3</sup>

---

### Familiar Quotations:

Too late I loved you, O Beauty so ancient, yet ever new! And behold, you were *within* me, and I out of myself, and there I searched for you.  
St. Augustine

Our life is fritted away by detail ... Simplify, *simplify*.  
Henry David Thoreau

Words are sacred.  
They deserve respect.  
If you get the right ones,  
in the right order,  
you can nudge the world a little.  
Tom Stoppard

---

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesia de Eucharistia of His Holiness Pope John Paul II