

Conflating Unity with Uniformity: Celebrating the Eucharist in the Context of Indigenous-Settler Reconciliation

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Introduction

Catholic sacramental theology proposes that each Eucharist has a reconciliatory effect regardless of the ministers and context of any given celebration.¹ At least, this is the theological ideal for each celebration of the Lord's Supper. However, since the earliest accounts of the Eucharistic meal this ideal communion has not always been enacted in ways that conform to this ideal.² So, what happens when the Eucharist, which is proposed as a ritual of healing and reconciliation, becomes a reenactment of harm or sinful social patterns? In recent years, many scholars have been highlighting this reality of broken and damaged liturgical celebrations. In an article in *Worship*, Tony Alonso invites liturgical scholars to develop more nuanced and truthful accounts of how the celebration of the Eucharist is complicit in the logic of sin.³ As a partial response to Alonso's invitation, this article hopes to contribute to this endeavour by examining the Eucharistic celebrations in the Canadian context of Indigenous-Settler reconciliation.

In the Canadian context, Indigenous-Settler reconciliation is an ever-present social reality. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), which concluded in 2014, outlined the multigenerational impacts of colonialism and, in particular, the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) on the Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The TRC final report labelled the IRSS and its underlying policies and atti-

1. David Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, Lex Orandi Series (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 63–72.

2. See Paul's admonition to the Corinthian community: 1 Cor 11:17–33

3. Tony Alonso, "Damaged Goods," *Worship* 97 (April 2023): 124–25.

tudes as cultural genocide.⁴ This final report also clearly identified the role of various Christian churches in this cultural genocide through the running of these Residential Schools. The immense and ongoing damage caused by the IRSS and other colonial projects has slowly prompted various Christian communities to embark on journeys of reconciliation. The Catholic Church, which ran the majority of the Residential Schools and has the longest history of missionary outreach to the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, is struggling to engage deeply with this reconciliation process. In this long colonial history, but specifically in the IRSS, Catholic liturgy, including the Eucharist, was utilized as a means of colonizing the students of these schools.⁵ Therefore, it is important to reflect on the Catholic Church's current Eucharistic rituals to see how they may be contributing to or hindering the journey of reconciliation.

In this article, I will propose that one of the ways that the Eucharist is being prevented from fulfilling its reconciliatory potential is by conflating the unity with the uniformity of the ritual participants. This claim will be demonstrated through a visual ethnographic study of two rituals that occurred during Pope Francis' 2022 penitential pilgrimage to Canada. This visit was organized as a response to the TRC's Call to Action #58, which requested that the Pope come to Canada and "issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools."⁶ Rituals associated with this visit were selected because they represent specific opportunities to ritualize the reconciliation that was being sought in both Indigenous and Settler contexts. The specific rituals of the Papal Mass of Reconciliation at the Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré and the Papal Apology at Maskwacis will be discussed later in the paper. Before discussing the rituals themselves, it is helpful to introduce the theoretical tools that will be used to analyze them.

Theory

To engage deeply with these rituals, I will use theoretical frameworks from ethnography and theology. My ethnographic approach is inspired by Kimberly Belcher's use of Victor Turner's stages of social drama to study the Lund Lutheran-Catholic liturgy.⁷ Several scholars, such as Cas Wepener working in the South

4. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, ed., *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 1.

5. Sarah Kathleen Johnson, "On Our Knees: Christian Ritual in Residential Schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 47:1 (March 1, 2018): 3–24.

6. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg, 2015), <https://nctr.ca/reports2.php>.

7. Kimberly Hope Belcher, "Ritual Techniques in Affliction Rites and the Lutheran-Catholic Eumenical Liturgy of Lund, 2016," *Yearbook for Ritual and Liturgical Studies* 38 (October 24, 2022): 22–41.

African context, have utilized these stages of social drama to reflect on the intersections of social and ecclesial reconciliation processes.⁸

In his article “Damaged Goods,” which I pointed to in the introduction, Alonso helpfully summarizes three approaches to analyzing how our Eucharistic celebrations are corrupted. One approach is the work of Lauren Winner, who identifies how our celebrations suffer from intrinsic and characteristic damage.⁹ This type of damage will become evident in the Eucharistic ritual examined in this article.

I will also draw upon the work of Susan Reynolds, who, through her qualitative study of a multiethnic congregation in Boston, describes an ecclesiology of solidarity that challenges a whitewashed sense of communion that she describes as ecclesial colorblindness.¹⁰ This tendency towards colourblindness will also become evident in the Eucharistic liturgy, which this article studies. Winner’s and Reynold’s theological perspectives help to describe the dynamics of the rituals observed for this study.

Social Drama of Reconciliation

Based on his work with the Ndembu people in Zambia, anthropologist Victor Turner suggests that there is an observable pattern for negotiating social disunity. He suggests four stages of this social drama: breach, crisis, recovery, reintegration, or schism.¹¹ He proposes that these stages can be observed in all societies and groups.

Cas Wepener and then Kimberly Belcher both adapted this framework and applied it to Christian rituals of reconciliation. Wepener developed a series of typologies that related to and expanded on Turner’s stages, and in turn, Belcher suggested a couple of modifications to Wepener’s typologies.¹² For the sake of simplicity, this article will rely on Belcher’s proposed stages of breach, crisis and diagnosis, redress/therapeutic, acceptance and forgiveness, binding or schism, and common external mission.¹³ The parallels between Belcher’s and Turner’s stages can be seen in Table 1.

8. Cas Wepener, *From Fast to Feast: A Ritual-Liturgical Exploration of Reconciliation in South African Cultural Contexts*, Liturgia Condenda 19 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2009).

9. Lauren F. Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

10. Susan Bigelow Reynolds, *People Get Ready: Ritual, Solidarity, and Lived Ecclesiology in Catholic Roxbury*, Catholic Practice in the Americas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022).

11. Victor W. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Performance Studies Series 1 (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 69–70.

12. Wepener, *From Fast to Feast*, 211.

13. Belcher, “Ritual Techniques in Affliction Rites and the Lutheran-Catholic Ecumenical Liturgy of Lund, 2016,” 24.

Table 1—Stages of Ritual Reconciliation

Turner— Stages of Social Drama	Breach	Crisis	Redress		Reintegration or schism	
Belcher Stages	Breach	Crisis and Diagnostics	Redress Therapeutic	Acceptance and Forgiveness	Binding or Schism	Common External Mission

A breach occurs when a socially held norm has been transgressed. This becomes a crisis as members of society take differing sides. Redress focuses on the healing of the breach. At a certain point, acceptance and forgiveness can be expressed once sufficient redressive actions have been taken. In some cases, this leads to the reforming or binding of the group. However, a more permanent schism can occur if the norms cannot be healed. In the process of rearticulating its identity, the group might look for some common external mission to reinforce its collective agency and identity.¹⁴

Following Wepener, Belcher suggests that each stage can be observed in rituals as a whole and in individual actions within each ritual. Both authors also suggest that different participants might experience each ritual or ritual action as belonging to a different stage.¹⁵ Different participants joining the rituals with differing embodiments will interpret the ritual actions in various manners.

Belcher describes the dynamic nature of this process in this manner: “At every stage of the process, ritual both reveals and changes the existing landscape: individuals enter each ritual with ideologies and goals, and ritual aids the formation and reformation of goals and the sorting and resorting of individuals into groups committed to these goals.”¹⁶ This process is not necessarily linear. Different stages might occur concurrently, in differing orders or repetitively. Rituals or actions within each ritual help to mediate the tensions of this social process.

Characteristic Damage

In her book, *The Dangers of Christian Practice*, Lauren Winner describes how even closely held Christian practices, such as the Eucharist, have been deformed through the effects of sin. Sin is pervasive, and there is nothing that can escape its influence. She argues that the damages to these practices are not arbitrary in nature and that, instead, they correspond to the practices in a manner that is intrinsic

14. Belcher, 25–26.
15. Belcher, 23–24.
16. Belcher, 24.

to the character of the practice itself.¹⁷ This has the effect of Christian practices inflicting harm in a manner antithetical to the practice itself.

Winner described this damage caused by sin as deformation because it relates to the form of the practice or thing in question.¹⁸ A practice's form will often dictate the deformation caused by sin. In her chapter on the Eucharist, Winner describes how supersessionism became a characteristic damage of Eucharistic celebrations through a "[...] slippage between Jews' "carnal" bodies and the body of Christ [...]."¹⁹ This deformation has fueled centuries of violence against the Jewish people. However, this does not mean that the celebration of the Eucharist is without hope or that it has wholly succumbed to deformation. The Eucharistic celebration is a gift from God and has redemptive effects; however, even from its inception, it has been marked by sin.²⁰ This deformation does not render the celebration of the Eucharist futile. Instead, it calls the participant of the Eucharistic celebration to a more profound commitment to renewal and reformation.

Reynolds—Ecclesial Colorblindness

From her qualitative study of a Boston parish, Susan Reynolds develops a critique of the communion ecclesiology that has developed following the Second Vatican Council. She suggests that communion ecclesiology has not adequately addressed issues of power and authority and has not fully addressed the realities of difference within the Church community.²¹ These limitations lead to ecclesial colorblindness, which Reynolds defines in this way:

Ecclesial colorblindness, then, posits the suspension of racial difference as a precondition for Christian unity. Ecclesial colorblindness views Christian identity as an alternative to racial and ethnic identity, dismissing the possibility of discrimination in the church with an insistence that all are one in Christ.²²

This dynamic conflates unity, a positive attribute of a Christian community, with an enforced uniformity that erases identity. One of the fundamental Eucharistic dynamics is the unity of the people partaking in this celebration.²³ Christians are called to strive to live united as members of the Body of Christ. However, this unity should not erase differences or identities. This desire for unity becomes deformed into uniformity when pressure is exerted to minimize or denigrate per-

17. Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice*, 3.

18. Winner, 5.

19. Winner, 34.

20. Winner, 55.

21. Reynolds, *People Get Ready*, 61.

22. Reynolds, 60–61.

23. For a more developed discussion of identity and the Eucharist, see Kevin Irwin's discussion of the "The Church's Eucharist." Kevin W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 72.

ceived differences. It is easy to see how this dynamic that Reynolds identifies as ecclesial colorblindness parallels the dynamics of colonialism, especially in the IRSS. These Residential Schools were designed to remove the Indigenous identity of the pupils who were forced to attend them.²⁴

As an alternative to communion ecclesiology, Reynolds proposes a solidarity ecclesiology as a means to “negotiate difference at the local level.”²⁵ This solidarity, drawn as a virtue from Vatican II, focuses on relationship and dialogue as central tenets for embracing difference. Solidarity embraces difference as a positive and avoids the pitfalls of ecclesial colorblindness. Solidarity ecclesiology pushes back on the sense that unity is only comfortable when it is expressed as uniformity.²⁶ This distinction will be critical for understanding some of the dynamics observed in the papal mass at Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré.

Visual Ethnography of Papal Ritual

During the papal penitential pilgrimage to Canada, the Pope visited Maskwacis First Nation, Edmonton, Lac Ste. Anne, Quebec City, Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré and Iqaluit. In each of these locations, the Pope participated in various rituals, some of which took the form of Catholic liturgies (Edmonton, Lac Sainte-Anne, Quebec City, Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré). In other places, the rituals were guided by Indigenous ceremonial patterns (Maskwacis, Iqaluit). These various rituals provide a unique opportunity to study how public rituals participate in the broader process of social reconciliation.

This article will use the papal reconciliation mass at the Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré as a case study. This article will also analyze the gathering at Maskwacis First Nation in Alberta, where the Pope read the text of his formal apology, as a foil that helps to highlight the intrinsic damage of the Eucharist at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. The Maskwacis event was the first major public ritual of the visit. Indigenous patterns of ceremony greatly influenced the structure of the event.

Methodology

This article is based on observations of one set of video recordings for the selected rituals. My observations of these recordings were made several years after the rituals themselves, so it is difficult to consider them participant observations in a traditional sense. My use of recordings of rituals as a source of ethnographic data draws heavily on Kimberly Belcher’s study of the Lund Lutheran-Catho-

24. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, 1–3.

25. Reynolds, *People Get Ready*, 34.

26. Reynolds, 58; Brett C. Hoover, *The Shared Parish: Latinos, Anglos, and the Future of U.S. Catholicism* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 187.

lic liturgy.²⁷ Like Belcher's observations of the Lund liturgy, my observations of these papal rituals are mediated by the videographers, producers and editors who produced the initial broadcasts.

All of the Pope's public events were broadcast live during his visit on several television channels and also online via various platforms. While many people gathered at each of these events, even more people would have participated in them through the live stream or broadcast. For example, the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré mass was simultaneously broadcast on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City so that more people could participate in the event.²⁸ Therefore, my observations of the recorded rituals align with how a majority of people would have originally experienced these rituals, participating virtually. Many of the recordings of these events are available on various YouTube channels and in the archives of different television channels.

In addition to these video sources, I have also included textual sources in my analysis. These included the published statement of apology that the Pope read at Maskwacis, the Pope's homily in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré and the liturgical misal that the Vatican published for the papal visit. These textual sources correspond to the words spoken during these rituals.

Reflexivity

As I embark on this ethnographic study, it is important to situate myself with regard to the subject matter and events that I am studying. I am a Jesuit priest, which means I belong to a religious order that ran one of the residential schools in Canada. I have worked at various points and locations with Indigenous peoples in the field of reconciliation.

I also have second-hand experience of these papal rituals. I have been privileged to spend time speaking with several participants about their experience of both of the rituals that are considered in this article. Their stories and perspectives are not mine to share. For that reason, I am bracketing, as much as possible, the second-hand information that I have received from participants of these rituals.

My personal engagement in this issue means that I am emotionally invested in the project of reconciliation project between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Therefore, I am approaching this study with the conviction that more needs to be done to further the reconciliation process in this context.

27. Belcher, "Ritual Techniques in Affliction Rites and the Lutheran-Catholic Ecumenical Liturgy of Lund, 2016."

28. Pope Francis references these people gathered on the Plains of Abraham in his homily during the liturgy. Pope Francis, "Homily at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré" (National Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, July 28, 2022), <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2022/documents/20220728-omelia-beaupre-canada.html>.

Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré²⁹

The Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré ritual was labelled as a Holy Mass for Reconciliation.³⁰ In its structure, it closely followed the typical format of a Catholic Eucharistic liturgy. The video coverage began by showing people gathering on the lawns and courtyards in front of the church, an imposing neo-gothic structure. Inside, the church was full of people. Following the entrance procession, some of the bishops were seated in the sanctuary choir stalls, and others, with the priests, sat in the front rows of the nave on both sides (Figure 1). The Pope was wheeled into the sanctuary from behind the high altar and took his place at the presider's chair, centred in the sanctuary behind the freestanding altar. The Pope was flanked by masters of ceremony, deacons and two bishops.

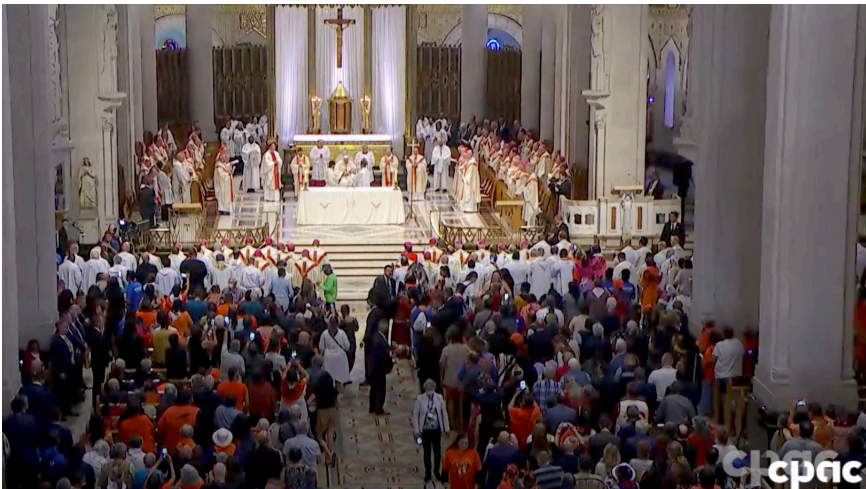


Figure 1: Clergy at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré mass.³¹ Used with permission.

The Pope, in this liturgy, was entirely surrounded by the clergy. To the point that even the first few pews in the nave, where the congregation typically sits, were taken up by members of the clergy. The video recording presented a visual white bubble of isolation around the sanctuary. This wall of clergy provides a visual representation of the ongoing breach or crisis. It presents a divide between the

29. The CPAC video archive was chosen as the source for this analysis. CPAC is a not-for-profit channel that covers major governmental and political events in Canada, similar to CSPAN in the United States. *2022 Papal Visit—Pope Francis Performs Mass in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, Quebec* (Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, Quebec, 2022), <https://www.cpac.ca/cpac-special/episode/2022-papal-visit—pope-francis-performs-mass-in-sainte-anne-de-beaupre-quebec?id=166216af-a891-401c-bcd0-3efcd357c965>.

30. See: The Holy See, *Viaggio Apostolico Di Sua Santità Francesco in Canada* (Vatican, 2022), <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2022/outside/documents/canada-2022.html>.

31. CPAC, *2022 Papal Visit—Pope Francis Performs Mass in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, Quebec*.

hierarchical Catholic Church, represented by the vested clergy and the lay faithful seated behind them. The lay participants were predominantly Indigenous Peoples, many of whom were wearing different forms of traditional regalia.

As the introductory rites began, the video footage briefly caught a banner held by two Indigenous women stretched out in front of the sanctuary (Figure 2). The banner read “Rescind the Doctrine.”³² While this silent protest unfolded, the Pope began the liturgy, speaking in French. While not planned, this protest at the beginning of the liturgy demonstrates how the different parties interpret this ritual. It also shows that at least some of the ritual participants felt that aspects of the crisis still needed public naming and that sufficient redress had not been undertaken.



Figure 2: The silent protest at the beginning of the liturgy.³³ Used with permission.

The biblical readings for the mass were all done in French, with the exception of the first reading being introduced and concluded by the lector in an Indigenous language. The Pope read his homily in Spanish, and a priest translated it into French. In contrast to everything spoken from the beginning of the mass, the prayers of the faithful were prayed by several Indigenous people in Indigenous languages, in addition to French and English. Likewise, a Francophone choir had performed all of the music up to this point. However, three Indigenous women sang the offertory song that accompanied several Indigenous People while they brought up the offertory gifts to the Pope.

This inclusion of Indigenous participants as readers, gift bearers, and singers might be interpreted as acts of redress—of giving prominence and space to Indigenous Peoples whose culture and way of life have been attacked by the Catholic

32. This referred to the Doctrine of Discovery, a widely held policy during European colonial expansion that allowed nations to claim land as their own without regarding the rights of the Indigenous inhabitants. This policy continues to have lasting impacts on Indigenous land claims and control over their own territory.

33. CPAC, 2022 Papal Visit—Pope Francis Performs Mass in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, Quebec.

Church for several hundred years. However, the presence of the large Franco-phone choir and other non-Indigenous lay ministers functioned to mute this inclusion as a ritual act of redress.

The Pope's homily made the intended audience of the liturgy apparent. He stated, "Allow me to accompany you as a Church in pondering these questions that arise from hearts filled with pain: Why did all this happen? How could this happen in the community of those who follow Jesus?"³⁴ This message makes it clear that this mass is a ritual of the Catholic Church for Catholics, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. The focus of these ritual actions is on the members of the Catholic Church. This emphasis on Catholic identity, in some manner, superseded the Indigenous or non-Indigenous identities of the participants. It presumed that the participants identified as Catholics first and Indigenous or non-Indigenous as secondary. This assumed uniformity of identity was also reinforced by the lack of direct mention of Indigenous Survivors who were present as a part of the congregation.

Cardinal Cyprien Lacroix, the Archbishop of Quebec City, and two other bishops presided at the altar for the Eucharist while the Pope looked on from the presider's chair. Following communion, the pope prayed the closing prayer, taken from the Roman Missal's Masses for Reconciliation. This prayer expresses a common external mission, the final stage of ritual reconciliation identified by Belcher.

May the Sacrament of your Son, which we have received, increase our strength, we pray, O Lord, that from this mystery of unity we may drink deeply of love's power and everywhere promote your peace. Through Christ our Lord.³⁵

This prayer suggests that this ritual is focused on recognizing God as the source of reconciliation and sharing that peace with others. The prayers focused on the Church being the conduit of reconciliation. In his homily, the Pope makes this common mission clear. He states, "Reconciled with God, with others and with ourselves, may we ourselves become instruments of reconciliation and peace within our societies."³⁶ These prayer texts, along with the message in the Pope's homily, ritually enact a call for a shared common mission. The texts point towards an assumed shared common identity of membership in the Catholic Church. This emphasis on common external mission appeared in stark contrast to the act of protest at the beginning of the mass. There was a performative disconnect between the experience of the presiders and the congregation.

34. Pope Francis, "Homily at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré."

35. This prayer was prayed in French during the liturgy. For the French version see the Missal published by the Vatican for the papal visit. The English cited here is the official English translation of the same prayer. The Holy See, *Viaggio Apostolico Di Sua Santità Francesco in Canada*.

36. Pope Francis, "Homily at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré."

Maskwacis Event³⁷

The ritual opened with the pope being pushed down a rural road in his wheelchair, surrounded by security personnel and men in suits. Notably, this entourage includes very few clergy, starkly contrasting to the Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré liturgy. The Pope first paused for a moment of silent prayer at a graveyard associated with a former Residential School (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The Pope praying at the cemetery.³⁸ Used with permission.

The opening actions of the Maskwacis ritual enact the crisis and its consequences. By stopping and praying at the graveyard, the Pope's actions are silently acknowledging the history and harm of the Catholic Church's participation in the colonial project. The visual image of the Pope sitting alone in his wheelchair in front of the graves creates a poignant symbol of the impacts of the crisis. These actions are reinforced later by the words of the Pope's apology, which acknowledged the harm caused by residential schools and colonialism.

Next, the pope was greeted by four chiefs dressed in traditional regalia from the local Indigenous communities. The Pope handed each of these chiefs a red box of tobacco, a customary gift when visiting an Indigenous community. The procession then moved towards the outdoor circular powwow structure. The Pope was brought to a dais and seated in the middle of the four chiefs (Figure 4).

37. CPAC, *Pope Francis Delivers Apology During Visit to Former Residential School* (Maskwacis, Alberta, 2022), <https://www.cpac.ca/cpac-special/episode/pope-francis-delivers-apology-during-visit-to-former-residential-school?id=c648fd30-5ce5-451c-b399-1f4ee02f5065>.

38. CPAC, *Pope Francis Delivers Apology During Visit to Former Residential School*.



Figure 4: The Pope seated with Indigenous Chiefs.³⁹ Used with permission.

The Pope's gifts of tobacco to the local Indigenous chiefs mark the Indigenous communities as the hosts of this ritual. The Pope is a guest at this ritual. The image of the Pope seated between the Indigenous chiefs on the dais also reinforces the Pope's role as a guest. He is the centre of attention, but his ecclesial retinue does not surround him.

Once the pope was settled, the grand entrance portion of the ceremony began. This included a procession accompanied by Indigenous drumming and singing (Figure 5). Many representatives from various Indigenous, Inuit, and Metis nations were in the procession, and a red banner bearing the names of the children who died in residential schools was also carried in it.



Figure 5: The Eagle Staff Entrance.⁴⁰ Used with permission.

39. CPAC, *Pope Francis Delivers Apology During Visit to Former Residential School*.

40. CPAC, *Pope Francis Delivers Apology During Visit to Former Residential School*.

The grand entrance of the Eagle Staffs and Indigenous, Metis and Inuit representatives encapsulate both crisis and redress stages. A grand entrance often marks the beginning of Indigenous ceremonies and gatherings. Many of these ceremonies were banned by the government and ridiculed by members of the Catholic Church. From this historical perspective, the grand entrance can be interpreted as an act of defiance. The announcer embodies this by speaking in an Indigenous language. He also explicitly acknowledges the resilience of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada as he introduces the victory song. This entrance, with its expressions of Indigenous culture, points towards redress and healing stages. The recovery of Indigenous customs and traditions has been a central part of the healing journey of many Indigenous peoples.⁴¹ However, the presence of the banner with the names of the children killed in residential schools is a clear visual reminder of the harms and abuses caused by the Catholic Church, and that breach is still present in that same ritual action.

Following the grand entrance, the Pope was welcomed by Chief Wilton Littlechild, a former commissioner of the TRC and member of the Ermineskin First Nation. The Pope responded to these remarks by reading his statement of apology. The Pope's apology may be interpreted as an enactment of redress. It is a response to the request made by the TRC, which had identified this action as an important step in the process of healing and reconciliation. The video coverage of the event showed that people in the crowd were emotionally moved by the Pope's apology. Applause was heard at several points, acknowledging their agreement with the Pope's message of repentance.

Following the apology, the pope exchanged gifts with various Indigenous representatives. Of particular note was the gift of Chief Littlechild, who placed a war bonnet on the Pope's head while the crowd applauded (Figure 6). Earlier in the event, the announcer described the war bonnet as symbolizing leadership. This gift could be interpreted as an act of acceptance of the Pope's apology and potentially an act of forgiveness. This particular gift stirred up much controversy following the event.⁴² Many people felt that the Pope had not done enough in the way of redress to warrant the gift of a war bonnet. This discrepancy points to the fact that different people interpret different actions in various manners, and each person does not find themselves in the same place of the social drama of reconciliation.

41. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, 9.

42. Niigaan Sinclair-Papal Visit: Catholic Church and the Four Steps of Reconciliation (Full Video) (Vancouver, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JShjKJTy8vc>.



Figure 6: The Pope receives a war bonnet from Chief Littlechild.⁴³ Used with permission.

Then, the Pope donned an orange stole to lead the Our Father in English and offer a blessing (Figure 7). The choice of an orange stole can also be interpreted as an act of redress. This orange stole is atypical because it is not a liturgical colour utilized by the Catholic Church. However, it is a colour that Indigenous Peoples have adopted to raise awareness about the harms of the Residential Schools.⁴⁴ Selecting this colour of the stole is a public acknowledgment of the harms of the Residential Schools and that acknowledging this harm is more important than following Catholic Church customs.



Figure 7: Pope wearing an orange stole.⁴⁵ Used with permission.

43. CPAC, *Pope Francis Delivers Apology During Visit to Former Residential School*.

44. For a history of the use of orange shirts as public acts of awareness raising see: John Boyko, "Orange Shirt Day," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, September 28, 2021, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/orange-shirt-day>.

45. CPAC, *Pope Francis Delivers Apology During Visit to Former Residential School*.

Discussion

The analysis shows that the Maskwacis ritual facilitated a greater expression of different stages of ritual reconciliation. In contrast, the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré ritual focused primarily on the final stage of the process, a common external mission. The differences between these two rituals point to the complexity of this reconciliation process and the limitations of its ritual expression at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. Even as a ritual specifically focused on reconciliation, its intrinsic dynamics could not embody the same variety of stages and expressions as the Maskwacis ritual.

As it was ritually expressed in the mass at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, the institutional Catholic Church sees itself predominantly in the ritual stage of a common external mission. The ritual actions and texts seemed to assume that all of the participants had a uniform experience of the stages of ritual reconciliation and that the binding stage of the social reconciliation process has occurred. This perspective seems to suggest that those present in this ritual identified sufficiently with the church to desire a common mission of reconciliation. However, the protest during the liturgy quickly dispels this assumption. The protest makes it evident that at least some of the Indigenous Peoples present were not living in the same stage of social reconciliation.

It may have been the case for some of these participants that the liturgy was experienced in the breach or crisis stages. From a breach perspective, the liturgy could be legitimately interpreted as a perpetuation of ecclesial power. The division of the clergy from the laity was delineated by the rows of clerics dressed in white. From this perspective, the people representing the perpetrating institution visually controlled the space (Figure 1). The lack of reference to Indigenous Survivors of the IRSS may have further compounded this sense of breach or crisis. This omission may reinforce narratives of the Catholic Church's lack of care or concern for the Survivors and, therefore, deepen the sense of ongoing breach.

The omission of any reference to the presence of Indigenous Survivors, the focus on a common mission of reconciliation, and the dominant placement of clergy all point to a Eucharistic liturgy that suffered under characteristic damage. This damage stunts the liturgy's capacity to embrace various stages of ritual reconciliation. The impacts of this damage inhibit the reconciliatory nature of the Eucharistic celebration. This damage is not identical to the deformation of supersessionism that Winner outlines in her book. This is a different deformation that is also intrinsic to celebrating the Eucharist. The deformation that is being surfaced here is the conflation of unity with uniformity that Reynolds described by the term ecclesial colorblindness. The narrowed vision created by this intrinsic damage sees that unity is only possible if there is a uniformity of expression and experience.

The damage inflicted on the unity of the gathered congregation in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré was made explicit when the ritual texts and actions did not leave

space for a diversity of experiences of reconciliation. The ritual embodied a united Catholic identity through its assumption of uniform experience and relationship to the ecclesial structure. This imposed uniformity continues to perpetuate dynamics of colonialism that were evident in the IRSS.⁴⁶ The ritual texts' focus on the Catholic Church's common mission to be an agent of reconciliation presumes that all members of the Church, or at least those present, are uniformly at that stage of the social reconciliation process. From this perspective, any possibility of schism is overlooked. It assumes that the congregation is uniformly identified with the ecclesial body. The presence of the protest action dispels this myth. There were members of the congregation who did not identify with the ecclesial body in a uniform manner. These individuals, who may even identify as Catholic, did not experience uniformity with the hierarchical structure that is supposed to represent this body. Indeed, many Survivors greatly mistrust the hierarchy and institution of the Church, while still identifying as Catholic.

The lack of reference to Indigenous Survivors of residential schools also points to the distortion of uniformity. Without being privy to the planning of this event and working within the limits set by the visual ethnographic method, it is impossible to know if this omission was an intentional decision on the part of the organizers of the mass or not. However, the lack of reference to Survivors may be interpreted as avoiding potential divisions within the congregation. The impact of avoiding references to Survivors makes the congregation feel more uniform than it might actually be. Acknowledging the presence of Survivors would have made the potential unhealed divisions explicit in the liturgy. This absence avoided the Survivor and perpetrator dichotomy. The clergy, regardless of their personal relationship to the Residential Schools, represent the institution that perpetrated this injustice. By avoiding acknowledging Survivors, it also avoids the implication of the Catholic Church as the perpetrator.

This deformation becomes even more evident when the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré mass is placed beside the ritual in Maskwacis. The unity, however tenuous, that was established in the Maskwacis ritual did not presume uniformity. It did not assume that the ritual participants were experiencing the ritual actions in the same manner. The gift of the war bonnet demonstrates the varied interpretations and stages present in that ceremony. The unity of that ritual was a unity of journeying, recognizing the real possibility of schism but being committed to repairing the breach. The greater variety of stages of ritual reconciliation that the ritual was able

46. It is possible to see the link between this intrinsic damage and broader patterns of coloniality, especially as it was experienced in the IRSS. For an exploration of ritual and liturgy in the residential school system see: Sarah Kathleen Johnson, "On Our Knees: Christian Ritual in Residential Schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada." Additionally, Claudio Carvalhaes outlines the deep connection between coloniality and 'oneness.' See: Cláudio Carvalhaes, "Liturgy and Postcolonialism: An Introduction," in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives: Only One Is Holy*, ed. Cláudio Carvalhaes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015), 1–20.

to hold is indicative of a unity that was not uniform. In this manner, the Maskwacis ritual is a helpful foil because it uncovers the subtle deformation that occurs when the desire for unity is expressed as uniformity.

The Eucharist is a sacrament of unity and reconciliation. However, this unity can be deformed into uniformity, which does not permit difference. In this context, uniformity presumes and enforces a common perception of the reconciliation process. It assumes that the group's internal reconciliation has already occurred and denies any real possibility of schism. This is intrinsic to the Eucharist's nature because it is a deformation of the desire for unity and reconciliation.

This deformation of unity into uniformity is not unique to this one Eucharistic celebration that was the subject of this article. The fact that Reynolds identifies this pattern operating in the realm of ecclesiology points to the prominent presence of this deformation in the Catholic Church. It is unsurprising to see echoes of this deformation that is ritually enacted in the Eucharist, at the source and summit of Catholic life, in other relational dynamics in the Church. This points to the deep relationship between what the church celebrates liturgically and its patterns of organization.

Reynold's proposal of an ecclesiology of solidarity can also find liturgical expressions. A clear example of this solidarity is the orange stole that the Pope utilized in Maskwacis (Figure 7). This non-traditional stole bends the liturgical norms, walking them away from the strict uniformity of approved liturgical colours. The orange stole is a visual symbol of solidarity with an Indigenous movement to remember the impacts of the IRSS.⁴⁷ Solidarity is lived through local relationships and, in the case of liturgy, is attentive to what stages of ritual reconciliation are operative in the community. A liturgy that embodies solidarity makes space for diverse expressions of the stages and holds these expressions together in tension.

Solidarity as a corrective to uniformity suggests that greater attention needs to be paid to who has agency to determine the form of the ritualization. Each of the rituals studied in this article embodied different approaches to sharing agency. The question of who has the agency to make decisions about the rituals points to where the power is being held. In Maskwacis, the Pope actively participated as a guest. The gathered participants expressed their agency in a variety of ways, by dancing, singing, by applause and by the gift giving to the Pope. In Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, it appeared like the institutional church was exercising its agency in the planning of the mass. However, it should not be assumed that the Indigenous participants lacked agency or participated in only a passive manner. Various Indigenous peoples actively participated in the liturgy through their reading, praying

47. This stole was gifted to the Pope by a member of the delegation that went to Rome in the lead up to the Papal visit. This deepens its symbolic solidarity with the community.

and singing. They fit their participation into roles that were outlined and dictated by the ritual organizers. Given the limitation of the roles, they still exercised their agency by their choice to participate. It also should not be assumed that the congregation was completely powerless, their agency may have been expressed as mental consent or dissent to the ritual.⁴⁸ The uniformity of the ritual suggests that Indigenous voices were not given equal agency in the planning of the mass. Solidarity requires attentiveness to shared agency especially in contexts of reconciliation especially in these situations where the abuse of power has been so damaging.

As a way of concluding this article, it may be possible to envision how the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré liturgy may have addressed this intrinsic deformation. By giving prominence to Indigenous survivors, either a place in the sanctuary or, at the very least, in the front pews, it would have demonstrated the diversity of experiences coinciding in the same ritual. Their prominence would have been a clear sign that their experience is important and that it is possible to hold multiple stages of the ritual reconciliation within the same ritual. Decentering the clergy and centring Survivors could have been an important means of acknowledging how the hierarchy's power needs to make room for voices that challenge the myth of uniformity. Also, by framing the desire for a common external mission as an aspiration desire and not a foregone conclusion would have permitted greater flexibility and greater unity amongst the participants. By expressing a common external mission as a future hope, the Church hierarchy would be articulating a desire to walk through the stages of reconciliation in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples.

Through identifying and outlining how the intrinsic damage of conflating unity and uniformity was expressed in one Eucharistic liturgy, I hope that this pattern has become more clearly recognized so that it can be readily identified and avoided in other Eucharistic celebrations. It is only by reflecting deeply on what we are celebrating that we can confront the logics of sin that influence our liturgies. We can strive to help our celebrations conform more and more to their goal of being rituals of reconciliation.

48. For a more detailed discussion of power and consent to ritual participation see: Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 207–8.