

## ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS

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SACRAMENT IN THE COMMON LIFE

Mother  
 gave us all love  
 all the love she had, and love to us all each.  
     Mother  
     gave us each,  
         to be had when she was gone,  
             a sterling silver candelabrum.  
                     The same one.  
                     In extreme age, Mother had become forgetful.

In her mind,  
     Mother had given the candelabrum only to one of us  
         but it was really to one and one and....

Mother, thinking that one was only one,  
     was unaware that one was each one.

No, that cannot be.  
     To give it to only one,  
         she would have to give it to this one instead of the others.  
             But when she gave, there were no others.  
                 There was only this one,  
                     this one standing here now.

The gift was for one, this one.  
     It couldn't have been also not for the others.  
         That was not Mother's way of loving.  
             There was no arithmetic in her loving.  
                 When it came to love, she couldn't count.  
                     Like God,  
                     she couldn't say 1-2-3....  
                     She could say only 1-1-1....

Mother,  
 through the candelabrum,  
     was giving love to each one,  
         was continuing to love each one,  
             as through family feasts for more than a half-century  
                 the candelabrum's candles had illumined each one.  
     The candelabrum was only one, but how many candles it had served, held up!  
 The candelabrum was and is zero-sum, only one.  
 The family love-feasts around it were zero-sum,  
     their unknown number reckoned when we children became old orphans.  
 Mother's love, and Father's, are not zero-sum.  
     Love, when it is love, is not zero-sum.

In giving it to each of us and thus increasing love,  
     Mother achieved a miraculous multiplication of the candelabrum and (she would  
 have been shocked to think of it!) set us up for a probate fight. Instead, the candelabrum's miraculous multiplication of love, and laughter.  
                     Or what else is a sacrament?

But who got the candelabrum?  
 I can't remember. I'm getting old, and forgetful.  
 But we all received the sacrament.