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# Introibo ad Altare Dei Exploring the Cross, the Mass, and the Last Supper

Jeffrey Rother

University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, jrother37@outlook.com

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THE SAINT PAUL SEMINARY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

*Introibo ad Altare Dei*

Exploring the Cross, the Mass, and the Last Supper

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Divinity

Of the University of St. Thomas

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in Theology

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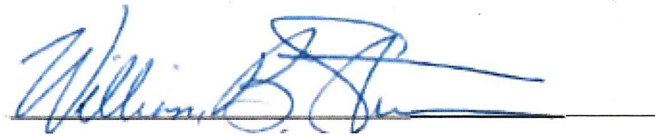
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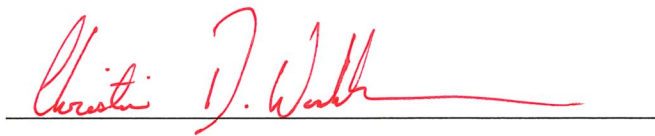
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2018

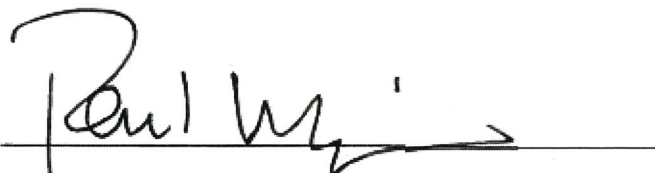
This thesis by Jeffrey Rother fulfills the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Theology approved by Dr. William B. Stevenson, PhD, as thesis Adviser, and by Dr. Christian D. Washburn, PhD, and by Dr. Paul J. Wojda, PhD, as Readers.



Dr. William B. Stevenson, PhD, Thesis Adviser



Dr. Christian D. Washburn, PhD, Reader



Dr. Paul J. Wojda, PhD, Reader

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## **Introduction**

“Send forth thy light and thy truth: they have conducted me, and brought me unto thy holy hill, and into thy tabernacles. And I will go in to the altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth.” (Ps. 42: 3-4 *DR*) This Psalm, recited before Mass for centuries, is a fitting way to begin the Holy Sacrifice; the human heart rejoices to approach the Lord of all creation and receive from Him the joy of Beatitude. The human soul yearns to give right adoration to God. God, in turn, has given instruction, from the beginning of time, about how He is to be adored. It has come down to our time that this highest adoration, the worship God Himself has instructed His servants to give Him, is His Son’s own Passion and Death, heralded by His prophets, anticipated in the Last Supper, and represented by His priests at every Mass and Divine Liturgy offered down to the present day.

Here, we will explore the relationship that these three events (the Passion and Death of Christ, the Last Supper, and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass) have with each other. We will see that these three events inform each other and find a greater significance when taken together than if they were taken only by themselves.

The present work is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter we will explore the significance of the concept of sacrifice in itself. The first section explores the matter of sacrifice in our current day and takes as its point of departure two different views of sacrifice: the first, that the concept is not central to worship and salvation, the second, that this concept is the central doctrine to worship and salvation. The second section explores natural sacrifices, those that are made outside of the realm of divine revelation, including the need of man to offer sacrifices to a higher being and the fittingness of his doing so. Special consideration is given to the Roman

concept of Piety. The third section discusses the sacrifices that occur in the Old Testament, particularly those that were given by God to Israel through the Law of Moses. We will explore these sacrifices as types both of Christ's sacrifice and of Mass.

The second chapter discusses Christ's Passion and Death. The first section deals with the connections between the Cross of Christ and the Last Supper particularly in light of the Jewish Passover ritual. The second section is a reflection on our Lord's Divine Priesthood, what He offers and the manner in which He is a priest. Section three considers the effects of Christ's sacrifice, particularly through the Scholastic lens of "Atonement."

The third chapter explores the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The first section relates the Mass to the Last Supper, particularly the Mass as a sacrament and as a ritual by discussing three parts in the Mass of the Faithful: the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion. The second section relates the Mass to Calvary by picking up the question of how the Mass can be the same sacrifice as that which happened on the Cross.

Overall, the intent of the present work is to bring to the front once again a neglected aspect of Catholic theology: that of the centrality of sacrifice to the concept of the Incarnation and Salvation; Christ's own work in our hearts is meaningless without keeping in mind the work He achieved at the end of His earthly life. The second intention of this project is to reignite in the heart of the reader an appreciation of what really happens at every Holy Sacrifice around the world: it is at the altar of God that our own personal salvation and sanctification takes place and is perfected.

## Chapter 1: Sacrifice as Such

### Status Quaestionis

Since the advent of the Liturgical Movement in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, many writers have sought to understand more clearly what the Church Fathers, the Scholastics, and the Magisterium meant when the Cross of Christ and the Sacrifice of the Mass were linked together. Up to the time of the theological disputations of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Council of Trent, Christians were in basic agreement about nature of the Real Presence and the sacrificial nature of the Mass. In fact, the 11<sup>th</sup> Century saw the first condemnation of a theologian by a Roman Synod for a Eucharistic Doctrine: Barenarius of Tours.<sup>1</sup> Since the Protestant denial of the sacrificial Mass and changes in theological emphases after the Second Vatican Council, many theologians have made attempts to offer explanations of the Mass and its relationship to our Lord's Cross that differ from those given by earlier theologians.<sup>2</sup>

One archetypal example of this theological revision of the sacraments, particularly in relation to the Sacrifices of the Mass and the Cross, is Robert Daly, SJ. As Matthew Levering said of Daly's theology, "For Daly, the Christ-event negates and displaces Israel's understanding of expiatory sacrifice, which must in his view not inform the theology of the Eucharist—thus requiring a radical revision of the doctrinal tradition."<sup>3</sup> Daly's view of Salvation History and Eucharistic theology necessitates that he reject the traditional language of sacrifice. Offering a

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<sup>1</sup> Liam Walsh, *Sacraments of Initiation: A Theology of Life, Word, and Rite* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2011), 298-299. NB: Chapters 9 and 10 of this book are a good summary of the development of the Doctrine of the Eucharist and of the relative unity amongst Christians for a millennium from the New Testament up into our age, focusing on the Patristic, Scholastic, and Tridentine ages.

<sup>2</sup> For a wide-ranging review and summary of such contemporary sacramental reinterpretations, see David Power, Regis Duffy, and Kevin Irwin, "Sacramental Theology: A Review of the Literature," *Theological Studies* 55 no. 4 (December 1994): 657-665. The specific articles follow until the conclusion on page 705, written by Power.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 9-10.

complete refutation of Daly is not our purpose here; we will simply use his thoughts as a point of departure for the rest of this work. Simply put, Daly's theological mistakes fall into two main categories: (1) an excessive emphasis on the communal dimension of the Eucharistic sacrifice and (2) an excessive emphasis on the interior dimension of sacrifice.

Daly places great amount of importance on the communal dimension of the Sacrifice, even going to the length of implying that the sacrament is meaningless if there is no discernable effect on the members of the community present at the Mass. In order to avoid misinterpreting Daly, we quote him at length to give proper context:

Eucharistic real presence exists not for its own sake—it is not happening just so that the body of Christ can be found on this or that altar—but for the purpose of the eschatological transformation of the participants. Take that away and the Eucharist becomes (even blasphemously) meaningless...A Eucharist without transformation of participants is a Eucharist without meaning; in postmodernity, where there is no meaning there is no reality.<sup>4</sup>

Daly writes in a quite poetic style which is not always clear upon first reading. His reliance on postmodern thought is by itself problematic, but what is more at issue is that Daly seems to reduce the purpose of the Eucharist and the Mass to a sort of transformation of the members of the community. Rarely, if ever, does he mention the purpose of the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass in relation to giving worship to God the Father and creator. When God the Father is mentioned, it is more likely that He is described as offering His Son to the people/community:

On the part of the members of the eucharistic assembly, their participation in the offering of Christian sacrifice is a dynamic, interpersonal reality that begins with the self-offering [*sic*] of the Father in the gift of the Son, continues with the totally free and loving self-offering response of the Son in his humanity to the Father and for us, and then, finally, becomes "Christian sacrifice" when the Christians

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Daly, "Sacrifice Unveiled or Sacrifice Revisited: Trinitarian and Liturgical Perspectives," *Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (March 2003): 37-38.



themselves, in the power of the same Spirit that was in Jesus, are transformatively (at least inchoatively) taken up into that trinitarian [*sic*] reality.<sup>5</sup>

Daly speaks much about transformation, which he seems wary to define clearly. It is most definitely true that those of the faithful in attendance witnessing the Sacrifice are affected by what they witness but it is certainly a stretch to imply that the Mass only becomes a “Christian sacrifice” when the people are “taken up” into some sort of “Trinitarian reality.” The Church consists of those baptized and living today, certainly, but the Church also resides in those of the faithful who have run the race and have received their final reward as well as those who are being purified and have not yet entered into heavenly glory. These two other parts of the Church (triumphant and suffering) also participate in each Mass; the suffering souls also receive relief from their pains through the Blood of Christ poured out at the Holy Sacrifice. To limit the participation to one of being taken up in the Spirit or of being present and transformed misses both the ecclesial and divine actions taking place.

Daly also suffers from placing too great an importance to the interior sacrifice to the near exclusion of the exterior sacrifice.

[The concept of] the participating faithful as being made present to the sacrifice of Christ...*totally excludes that sacrifice can mean that something is done to something or, even worse, that something is done to someone. It sees sacrifice as a totally personal—indeed the person-constituting event par excellence—interpersonal event.*”<sup>6</sup>

The concept and reality of sacrifice is limited down to being only a meeting of persons, as if there is nothing essential to the relationship happening externally to each party. In his reasoning,

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Daly, “Eucharistic Origins: From the New Testament to the Liturgies of the Golden Age,” *Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (March 2005): 18.

<sup>6</sup> Daly, “Sacrifice Unveiled,” 38-39. (Emphasis in the original)

if there be any offering, any giving up of something, or any action performed on another thing, then such an act is completely non-essential to a proper understanding of Christian sacrifice and what happens at Holy Mass. Although he was writing before Daly began writing, Abbot Anscar Vonier rebuts the argument clearly and succinctly: “To entirely spiritualize the oblation and make of it exclusively an act of the created mind and will would be the abolition of the sacrifice; all sacrifices are of the things that are bodily.”<sup>7</sup> Men by nature are corporeal creatures and relate to each other, the created order, and God through their bodies and senses. To eliminate the external and corporeal dimension of sacrifice is to, as Vonier said, abolish the sacrifice.

No intent exists here to abolish the sacrifice. Instead, we hope to enter into it more deeply in order to understand the traditional teaching of the Church, through the Fathers, the Scholastics, and the Magisterium. We shall take as a starting point the words of Ludwig Ott: “By sacrifice is understood in the widest sense, the surrender of some good for the sake of a good aim. The religious meaning attaching to sacrifice in the wider sense is every inner act of self-surrender to God, and every outer manifestation of the inner sacrificial disposition, e.g., prayer, alms-giving, mortification.”<sup>8</sup> An act of sacrifice, therefore, contains within it a twofold reality: the inner disposition of the one offering and the external actions that flow from the internal disposition. Such an understanding is intuitive for Catholics, since we understand humans are composite creatures. Though God is by nature spiritual, we are not and therefore rightly desire to express in an outward, physical manner the interior disposition of the soul. While a sacrifice holds both an internal and external dimension, it should not be counted that both stand as equals, as Vincent McNabb said, “Sacrifice is twofold; internal and external. The internal sacrifice is the

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<sup>7</sup> Anscar Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (Bethesda, MD: Zaccheus Press, 2004), 107.

<sup>8</sup> Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Patrick Lynch, ed. James Bastible (St. Louis: Herder, 1960), 183.

cause of the external sacrifice; the external sacrifice is the sign of the internal. The internal sacrifice is a sacrifice *per se*; the external sacrifice is not a sacrifice *per se* but by reason of the internal sacrifice.”<sup>9</sup> The existence or worthiness of the external sacrifice is contingent upon the interior disposition of the one making the offering. In the Old Testament, many prophets decried the unworthy and unaccepted sacrifices taking place in the Temple because the nation was not observant of the Law.<sup>10</sup> In relation to the Sacrifice of the Mass, the oblation is always acceptable because the interior disposition of the Church is perfectly aligned to the will of Christ whose Perfect Sacrifice it represents.

### **Natural Sacrifice**

Man is ordered to God as his end.<sup>11</sup> Though his nature is wounded, he is nevertheless capable of naturally drawing toward God and finding the desire to give Him His due in some capacity. Without Divine Revelation there is no possibility of the burden of sin being lifted from man’s shoulders. He cannot do it himself, yet he knows in his heart<sup>12</sup> that he must make amends with God for the sin he has committed. Whether a man knows the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or sees only the fleeting phantasms of God in creation and worships the unknown god<sup>13</sup> he recognizes and intuits that God or the gods are greater than he and that he owes something because of it. Men are not capable of protecting themselves from all dangers and men certainly are not *de facto* in right relationship with that which is above them. As Saint Thomas says:

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<sup>9</sup> Vincent McNabb, “A New Theory of the Eucharistic Sacrifice,” *Blackfriars* 4, no. 42 (September 1923): 1088.

<sup>10</sup> Amos 5:21-27, Mal 1:7-11, Isa 1:10-17, Mic 6:6-8, Jer 1:1-15.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1, 1, trans. Vernon Bourke. Fathers of the Church, Writings of Saint Augustine vol. 21 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Rom 2:14-15.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 17:23.

Natural reason tells man that he is subject to a higher being, on account of the defects which he perceives in himself, and in which he needs help and direction from someone above him: and whatever this superior being may be, it is known to all under the name of God. Now just as in natural things the lower are naturally subject to the higher, so too it is a dictate of natural reason in accordance with man's natural inclination that he should tender submission and honor, according to his mode, to that which is above man.<sup>14</sup>

We see what Saint Thomas is talking about when we consider an analogy to the concept on the human level. In family life, children are under the authority of their parents (hence the Fourth Commandment); even after growing to adulthood, the children continue in the obligation of honor and deference to the two persons who procreated them. This is a very natural human reality. In religious life, the brethren are subordinate to the superior. Whether the superior has been elected or appointed, the community owes a natural deference and honor to the superior.<sup>15</sup> In the order of creation, it is no different: God is the cause of all beings and so all created things are obliged to render to God due honor and reverence. This honor is made even more imperative if, as in the case of humanity, one or more of those creatures turns away from the divine precepts and disobeys the eternal law. In this case, not only is the creature obliged to offer due honor to God, but he is now obliged to make amends with God for his act of disobedience.

Aquinas develops this argument into one of the fittingness of sacrifice in expressing the deference and obedience due to God. He continues that man understands the world through sensible things and sacrifice is a fitting sensible sign for inferiors to relate to superiors.<sup>16</sup> At first glance, such a means of relating to the God of Jesus Christ would seem abominable; our Lord

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 85, a. 1, in *Summa Theologiae: Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 781-782.

<sup>15</sup> Benedict of Nursia, *The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict*, LXIII, (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1865), 117-119.

<sup>16</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 85, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 781-782.

Himself quotes Hosea, stating that mercy is more desirable to God than sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> And this is true if we take His meaning to be that acts of mercy and a humble heart must never be separated from one's intentions when offering sacrifice to God. He was berating the Pharisees for being cold and unwelcoming to sinners and those who are contrite of heart.<sup>18</sup> Saint Thomas addresses this issue of sacrificial fittingness indirectly later on in the *Summa* when he discusses our Lord's priesthood:

Two things are required for the perfect cleansing from sins, corresponding to two things comprised in sin—namely, the guilt of sin and the debt of punishment. The guilt of sin is, indeed, blotted out by grace, by which the sinner's heart is turned to God: whereas the debt of punishment is entirely removed by the satisfaction that man offers to God. Now the priesthood of Christ produces both these effects. For by its virtue grace is given to us, by which our hearts are turned to God.<sup>19</sup>

We see here that for Saint Thomas, the priesthood of Christ and His Sacrifice are the lens through which we ought to look at sacrifices in general and the virtue of religion.<sup>20</sup> Our Lord's offering of Himself is the highest act of piety offered to God on the part of man and as a result sins are cleansed and the debt of sin is remitted. We will discuss these matters specifically later<sup>21</sup> but the point now is that our Lord's example is in following with and does not contradict natural reason. Christ was fully and perfectly man and followed both the precepts of the Old Law and the precepts of the Natural Law perfectly.

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<sup>17</sup> Hos 6:6.

<sup>18</sup> Mt 9:11ff.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 3, in *Summa Theologiae: Tertia Pars, 1-59*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 247.

<sup>20</sup> Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 69.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 2, *Sacrifice and Atonement*

All cultures have at least some sense of man being incomplete in this world. Classical Buddhism and western Stoicism state that desire is the font of this incompleteness and that to kill desire is to be rid of suffering and strife. Many western forms of paganism (archetypally Greek and Roman paganism) concluded that man had sinned against the deities in some way and that the gods must be placated by the offering of a victim in ritual worship. This act of offering could also appear in an impetratory manner, asking for some favor or another. In either case, the gods must be swayed by the offering of gifts by men. Whether the offerings worked or not is a different matter; the point here is that there is seen by men a certain weakness in character which must be made up for in some way. Saint Thomas and Saint Paul say as much when they both assume that each man has a law written on his heart that his conscience must obey. And Saint Thomas understands very clearly that one of the principles of the natural law is that God must be given His due, even if He is not expressly known.

In Latin, *pietas* covered both elements of relating to the gods and also relating to elders.<sup>22</sup> The ancient Romans are held up even today as the archetype in the western world for their understanding of cultural piety. The pious man in ancient Rome was the man who gave due honor to the gods, observed the state feasts and rituals, gave deference to the emperor, and honored his father and ancestors. Aeneas, being the archetypal model of Roman virtue, is continually referred to as *Pius Aeneas*.<sup>23</sup> The story of the fall of Troy and the escape of Aeneas (the climax of Book 2) ends with Aeneas in flight, carrying his father, Anchises, who is holding the household gods, and leading his son, Iulus, by the hand. In this image appears the model of the Roman ideal of life: care of heritage (father), care of successive generations (son), care and

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<sup>22</sup> *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “*pīētas, ātis*.”

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Moseley, “Pius Aeneas,” *The Classical Journal* 20, no. 7 (April 1929): 387. Aeneas is associated with the virtue of piety 25 times throughout the whole of the poem; evidently, this was an important descriptor for his hero in Virgil’s mind.

concern for the family deities. Every Roman had these responsibilities and was expected to carry them out faithfully for the good of Rome.

The benefit that we have in regard to these matters is that we now are able better to understand the language, visibly and verbally, that the Christian sacrifice uses. There is, however, a danger in this practice. We ought not judge Christ's Sacrifice by the criteria of earlier sacrifices but judge the earlier sacrifices by the Sacrifice of Christ:

[T]he whole ancient sacrificial rite was figurative of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. This means that we are to explain the ancient sacrifices through the sacrifice of the Cross and not *vice versa*. We are dealing with the supernatural, the divinely established, the divinely revealed, in this matter of sacrifice; and the speculations of natural theology ought to be subservient to the historic rites revealed by God Himself.<sup>24</sup>

Abbot Vonier provides much theological wisdom here. Though the disciplines of philosophy and archaeology can provide helpful points in understanding various matters in theology, ultimately revealed truth is the measuring stick by which all other disciplines receive their value. Here, we will do the same. The sacrifices of the Old Law and the pagan religious practices provide a background for the imagination in understanding the accidental particularities of the Sacrifice of Christ, but the Cross itself is the significant thing and is the foundation and the lynch pin for understanding the previous practices. The images serve the Cross, not the other way round. The sacrifices of the Old Law and the oblations of the Natural Law are the prefigurements of the Cross; they can only be understood in light of the significance of the Cross.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Vonier, *Key to the Doctrine*, 106.

<sup>25</sup> Heb 9, especially verse 11 and following.

Sacrifices are, at their most basic level, symbolic actions. Through material signifiers, they express the acts of interior devotion to God in an exterior manner.<sup>26</sup> The desires residing in the heart are manifest materially and through action. This symbolism occurred in both the Israelite sacrifices and the pagan offerings of wider antiquity. In terms of their base, naturally symbolic level (not their spiritual symbolism), the sacrifices of Israel and pagan antiquity effectively had the same meaning: humanity is limited and in need of divine assistance, and the offering of material goods demonstrates the offeror's dependence of and obedience to the entity being worshipped. This notion or intuition of limitation archetypally is understood further as the breaking of a precept, falling short of a goal/ideal, or some other supreme fault, which would eventually develop into the concept of Original Sin. In both pagan antiquity and ancient Israel, as mentioned above,<sup>27</sup> the offerors understood their own offenses and their need to be forgiven or cleansed of guilt.

How must this guilt be neutralized? The one who has sinned has offended another who is higher in dignity than himself, to wit, infinitely higher. A mortal cannot effect a perfect cleansing of himself of an infinite offense, but he can make a symbolic reparation that demonstrates his interior disposition of contrition and understanding of the consequences of sin in an external way.

In no way could man better express his voluntary abjection before God than by substituting in his own place, and sacrificing, a domestic animal, thus protesting that God is the master of life and that the right to exist belongs to God alone. In no way could he more clearly manifest his repentance, his need and his wish of expiation at all costs, than by shedding the blood of the victim which represents him before divine Justice.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Scott Hahn, ed. *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 794.

<sup>27</sup> See pp. 10-11

<sup>28</sup> Julius Grimal, *The Priesthood and Sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, trans. M. J. Keyes (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1915), 9.



The offeror takes a good thing from his own possessions (one that might otherwise feed his family or help to till his fields) and willingly offers it to God in his own place, understanding that what happens to the sacrificial victim ought to, in justice, happen to him as the natural result of his disobedience to the moral law. On the symbolic level, the animal victim is a stand-in for the one making the offering. He knows that he has earned death and punishment for his sins, but cannot offer himself in such a way that maintains his life while at the same time makes perfect reparation for those offenses. Thus, in a spirit of humility, devotion, and contrition, he offers another who represents himself, understanding that if he could be the victim offered, he would be. Julius Grimal continues after the above quotation that both Israel and the ancient pagans had some sort of sense of the substitutionary aspect of sacrifice.<sup>29</sup> How clearly worked out these senses were is another matter, the important point here is that the aspect of substitution, of a victim standing in for another, had some place in the ancient understanding of sacrifice. If we remember what Abbot Vonier said earlier,<sup>30</sup> it is Christ's sacrifice on the Cross that gives the symbolic power to the ancient substitutionary sacrifices.

### **Old Testament Sacrifice**

The sacrifices that appear in the Old Testament are of supreme importance when considering our Lord's Sacrifice on the Cross.<sup>31</sup> He was born a Jew, a son of Judah. It goes without saying that Christ observed the Mosaic Covenant perfectly in every way, even though He possessed full power over it. As the Apostle Paul references, He was "made of a woman,

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<sup>29</sup> Grimal, *Priesthood*, 11-15.

<sup>30</sup> See p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> "A most important function of the Mosaic sacrifice was to serve as a type or figure of the Sacrifice of the Cross." Joseph Pohle, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise vol. 2*, ed. Arthur Preuss (St. Louis: Herder Book Company, 1917), 291.

made under the law: that He might redeem them who were under the law.”<sup>32</sup> By His words and deeds, He sets up the practices of Israel, fulfills, and transforms them so that through Him, we might be granted adoption into the house of God. The detail with which the Lord delineated the sacrificial practices is important, as Saint Irenaeus said, “For with Him there is nothing purposeless, nor without signification, nor without design.”<sup>33</sup> God gave remarkably clear directions when it came to how He wanted Israel to offer Him worship; the first ten chapters of *Leviticus* deal specifically with the various sacrifices and the priesthood of Israel.

The effects of the Mosaic sacrifices were, however, limited; they did not in themselves effect the full remission of personal or public sin. Their most important dimension, while remaining full sacrificial acts in themselves, were being prefigurements of the Sacrifice of our Lord:

As the Levitic [sic] priesthood was a figure of the one High Priest, Jesus Christ, so the sacrifices of the Mosaic law were a shadow and a type of the one great Sacrifice of the Cross. Being in themselves imperfect and inefficacious, the sacrifices of the Levites could effect a legal ‘cleansing of the flesh,’ but no remission of sins. Their very insufficiency made them prophetic types of the perfect sacrifice of the New Law.<sup>34</sup>

What Msgr. Pohle says about the limitedness and insufficiency of the Mosaic sacrifices are key to understanding their role in the whole of Salvation History. If the Holocaust were redemptive and propitiatory fully, there would have been much less of a need for God to become man and save His creation.<sup>35</sup> The sacrifices of the Old Law had, indeed, some sort of an effect. They

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<sup>32</sup> Gal 4:4-5.

<sup>33</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Hæreses*, IV, 18, 2, in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 485.

<sup>34</sup> Pohle, *Sacraments*, 291-292.

<sup>35</sup> Gal 3:21.

provided for a legal cleansing that made some sort of reconciliation possible and perhaps assuaged God's justice, but through themselves they could not remit the sins and place men back into complete harmony with God. So limited was the Old Law that it could not even confer grace through itself. As Aquinas said, "Although the Old Law did not suffice to save man, yet another help from God besides the Law was available for man, viz. faith in the Mediator, by which the fathers of old were justified even as we were. Accordingly God did not fail man by giving him insufficient aids to salvation."<sup>36</sup> This was the reason why Paul said that the Old Law was the law of death.<sup>37</sup> So limited was the Mosaic Law that any saving grace that came to the patriarchs and holy people of Israel came because of the saving work of Christ: they "were justified even as we were."

There was no codified set of sacrifices in place during the time of the patriarchs; Abel offered his firstlings to God by his own authority and initiative, Abraham was instructed by God to build an altar and set his son upon it. These acts of worship occurred before the institution of the hereditary Aaronic Priesthood and were acceptable during their time. After the growth of Israel into a nation and God instituted the Aaronic line of priests, such acts of visible sacrifice were only allowed to occur through the mediation of God's instituted hierarchy. However, Dr. Scott Hahn suggests that the Levitical Priesthood and its mode of sacrifice "was not part of the original covenant sealed at Mount Sinai; rather, it was added as a legal amendment to the Sinai covenant after the golden-calf apostasy of Israel (Exod 32:1–6). In other words, sacrifice became part of the Sinai covenant only in its renewed form after its original form was broken."<sup>38</sup> In other

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 98, a. 2, ad 4, in *Summa Theologiae: Prima Secundae, 71-114*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 264. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 98, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 261-262; *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 107, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 416.

<sup>37</sup> 2Cor 3:6, Rom 5.

<sup>38</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 795.

words, one could suggest that God had intended for the father of each household to fulfill a priestly role for his family in such a manner as the roasting of the lamb and eating unleavened bread during the original Passover in *Exodus*.

At any rate, with the mass idolatry of the Golden Calf, God gave Himself as the reward for the obedience of the Tribe of Levi and instituted the hereditary priesthood in the line of Aaron. And God was very particular about how He was to be worshipped along with the manner of sacrifice and when sacrifices were to occur. The most striking aspect of the method and manner of sacrifices were their relationship with God and their distinctiveness. Many of the animals that were objects of sacrifice were worshipped as deities by neighboring nations. This was seen clearly by the Roman historian Tacitus:

Moses, wishing to secure for himself into the future nation, gave them new ceremonies hostile for other men. That which is profane for them is sacred for us; once more, things are lawful for them which are for us sinful. They had driven out the likeness of the animal, upon which showing wandering and thirst. They consecrated to the innermost, while killing the ram, seemingly to the humiliation of Hammon. The bull also is slaughtered, for the Egyptians worship at Apin.<sup>39</sup>

God was teaching Israel, through the instituted rituals, that God Himself has absolutely no need of the offerings that He instructed Israel to give. All of the sacrifices were ordained to train the imagination and will of Israel to worship the one God, the God of Abraham and be a corrective to the temptations to idolatry.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, there was a more positive aspect to the symbolism expressed through the Mosaic sacrifices. Many of the covenants that bound the Lord and Israel to

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<sup>39</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, *Historiarum Libri*, V, 4, 1-7, C. D. Fisher, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959). Cf. Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 797. “Moyses quo sibi in posterum gentem firmaret, novos ritus contrariosque ceteris mortalibus indidit. profana illic omnia quae apud nos sacra, rursum concessa apud illos quae nobis incesta. effigiem animalis, quo monstrante errorem sitimque depulerant, penetrali sacravere, caeso ariete velut in contumeliam Hammonis; bos quoque immolatur, quoniam Aegyptii Apin colunt.”

<sup>40</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 796.

each other were sealed with a particular sacrifice, some of which were commemorated and renewed on certain feast days. These sacrifices expressed, through the mediation of the slain animal, the closeness and intimacy with which God and Israel were bound. The covenants were expressions of the closest of familial bonds and the pouring out of the blood of the victim symbolized the acknowledgement by each party of the responsibilities therein as well as the ensuing blessings and curses that may entail.<sup>41</sup> Clearly, then, God used the system of sacrifices He ordained not out of His own necessity, but as a pedagogy for Israel. The stiff-necked people were slow to turn from idols and remain under the mantle of God and so needed different sacrifices to teach them about their various needs and total dependency on God. There were various sacrifices given directly by God to Israel, but the four that are most important for our purposes here are the Holocaust, Sin Offering, Peace Offering, and Cereal Offering.

The Holocaust sacrifice<sup>42</sup> is the prime archetype of the sacrifices of the Old Law. It atoned for the sin of Israel and was performed each day once in the morning and once in the evening. The symbolism of the Holocaust was to express the nature of the relationship between God and His people. The complete consumption of the burnt offering was performed in order to express to Israel that the soul of each man is intended to be consumed in the fire of God's life and love.<sup>43</sup> God's greatest desire of man is that he have the supreme joy of divine life within him. Traditionally speaking, this joy only comes about in man when he is in a position of adoration toward God. It is because of this need for joy that Saint Alphonsus Liguori said, "The Sacrifices of Peace"<sup>44</sup> were instituted to render to God the worship of adoration that is due to him as the

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<sup>41</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 795.

<sup>42</sup> Lev 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 245-246.

<sup>44</sup> In context, it makes much more sense if we take Liguori's meaning of "Sacrifices of Peace" to refer to the Holocaust offerings. This may be a translation quirk or a character of the saint's writing style.

sovereign master of all things.”<sup>45</sup> The Holocaust was the prime image for adoration for Israel<sup>46</sup>; as the whole offering was consumed by fire so should the whole man give himself over to God.<sup>47</sup> As we will see later,<sup>48</sup> Christ’s offering of Himself on the Cross is the perfect fulfillment of the Holocaust, not because He was consumed by fire but because His heart and will are perfectly aligned with the will of His Father.

Unfortunately, there were times when persons did not wholly give themselves over to God in adoration. Sin was a problem in Israel just as sin is a problem today. God, therefore, knowing the problem of sin, prescribed a way for Israel to make amends specifically for its communal sin as well as for the sins of persons. The sin offerings<sup>49</sup> served as an instrument for both these necessities, as Saint Thomas implies, “Now man is required to offer sacrifice for three reasons: First, for the remission of sin, by which he is turned away from God. Hence the Apostle says (Heb. 5:1) that it appertains to the priest *to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins*.”<sup>50</sup> God is supremely merciful and moves tirelessly to return sinners to His loving embrace. However, when one sins, the bond between him and God is severed; an atoning sacrifice is necessary for the bond to be remade. Whether individual or communal, the sin offerings concerned both personal sin and about ritual purity; the two appear to go hand in hand.<sup>51</sup> One who had sinned also was barred from full participation in the other temple offerings. The most well-known form of the sin offering was that of the Scape-goat, which was released in the wilderness yearly in atonement of

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<sup>45</sup> Alphonsus Liguori, *The Holy Eucharist*, vol. 6 of *The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori*, ed. Eugene Grimm (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1887), 17.

<sup>46</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 792.

<sup>47</sup> As should the whole nation. It is an interesting quality that the nation (thousands of people) should often times be described and related to in the singular. In a certain respect, the singularity of Israel allows each member of the nation to see himself as Israel relating to God.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 2, *Sacrifice and Atonement*

<sup>49</sup> Lev 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 245.

<sup>51</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 793.

the sin of Israel. Saint Alphonsus Liguori links closely the scape-goat sin offering with our Lord's Sacrifice on the Cross:

[The scape-goat] was the most expressive figure of the sacrifice of the cross. Jesus Christ was laden with all the sins of men, as Isaias had foretold: The lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa 8:6). He was afterwards ignominiously led forth from Jerusalem, whither the Apostle invites us to follow him by sharing in his opprobrium: Let us go forth therefore to him without the camp, bearing his reproach (Heb 8:13). He was abandoned to the ferocious beasts; that is to say, to the Gentiles, who crucified him.<sup>52</sup>

In context, Saint Alphonsus is stating that the scape-goat is the most expressive sin offering of all the forms of sin offering in use by Israel. It was not for nothing that our Lord hung outside the walls of Jerusalem on the day of His death. He was the Sin Offering for the whole world. He allowed Himself to be abandoned to the will of the Romans and the Chief Priests of the Jews and took on the "sins of men" so that through His self-offering their sins and the sins of the whole world might be cleansed.

The peace offerings<sup>53</sup> were often presented on much more joyous and celebratory occasions. Their purpose appeared much more to be one of recognizing Israel's faithfulness to the Law and strengthening the existing bond with God.<sup>54</sup> Also called the communion offering, the sacrifices was divided into parts. One part would be burnt whole being given to God, one part would be the share for the priests who offered the sacrifice at the behest of someone, and the third part would be the share for those who requested the oblation.<sup>55</sup> Saint Thomas places high value on the symbolism of the peace offerings saying in one example, "That man may be

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<sup>52</sup> Liguori, *Eucharist*, 17-18.

<sup>53</sup> Lev 3.

<sup>54</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 794.

<sup>55</sup> Lev 7:28-35.

preserved in a state of grace, by ever adhering to God, in Whom his peace and salvation consist. Wherefore under the Old Law the sacrifice of peace-offerings was offered up for the salvation of the offerers, as is prescribed in the third chapter of Leviticus.”<sup>56</sup> The peace offerings served as a type of the Eucharist, serving as a memento of the union with God and a preservative against sin of which the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament are the perfection.

While on the topic of the types of the Eucharist, the cereal offerings<sup>57</sup> are most immediately evocative of the offering of the bread and wine at Holy Mass. The most obvious reason, of course, is that both the cereal offerings and the offering of the species at Mass are of non-bestial origin. Furthermore, grains were not the only species offered in cereal or first-fruits offerings; wine was offered in some cases of peace offerings and wine is always offered at Mass. It is interesting to note what Dr. Hahn suggests about cereal offerings: “Evidence suggests that the bloodless cereal offering was not an independent form of sacrifice; rather, it appears as an auxiliary sacrifice that was meant to accompany various animal offerings.”<sup>58</sup> Similarly, as we will see later, the offering of the elements at the Offertory in Mass is understood as also an auxiliary sacrifice which also has its own characteristics of a natural sacrifice.

The Mosaic sacrifices were not for all time; it was necessary for them to be replaced by something that could accomplish what they pointed toward. Abbot Vonier synthesizes this reality in an apt manner:

We surely know best what a sacrifice really is from the inspired literature of our scriptures; the Christian Sacrifice, with its special rites, stands apart on its own merits. It would certainly be dangerous to formulate a theory of sacrifice quite independent of that immense sacrificial life that has gone on for thousands of

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<sup>56</sup> *Summa Theologiæ*, III, q. 22, a. 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 245.

<sup>57</sup> Lev 2.

<sup>58</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 793.



years under God's sanction and direction, and to apply that formula to the divinely instituted sacrifices. It would be an attempt to explain the greater thing by the smaller, the divine institution by the human custom; certainly no theory of sacrifice could ever adequately meet the case of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. It is a sacrifice so entirely *sui generis* that it has to be defined by itself.<sup>59</sup>

Vonier summarizes both aspects of the relationship perfectly. The prefigures are relevant for a deeper understanding of the Sacrifice God has instituted for the rest of time, but in no way does the new Sacrifice stand in dependence of the old sacrifice as if there would be no meaning to the new without an understanding of the old. The Holy Mass is now the archetype by which all other sacrifices must derive their meaning. Any true and acceptable sacrifice that stands apart from the Mass must derive itself from the Mass in order to be acceptable to God, since there is now only one true Sacrifice, that of Christ.

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<sup>59</sup> Vonier, *Key to the Doctrine*, 105.

## Chapter 2: The Passion

### The Cross and the Last Supper

The Passover meal that our Lord celebrated with His disciples was an anticipation of His self-offering that was to take place the next day. Saint Luke tells us that Christ desired greatly to “eat this pasch” with His disciples.<sup>60</sup> He wanted very much to give them the gift He was about to give—Himself. We should remember that His whole purpose for coming into the world was to give Himself for the life of the world.<sup>61</sup> Everything He did was ordered toward that purpose. The Nativity, Circumcision, Miracle at Cana, Sermon on the Mount, Cleansing of the Temple, and the Last Supper all had as their final culmination His death on the Cross and Resurrection. However, one could regard the Last Supper as having a special connection with the Passion,<sup>62</sup> since the two events occurred in such a close proximity to each other; it was the last meal our Lord shared with His companions before He was hung on the Cross at the next midday. More deeply, however, there is a co-symbolism of the two events: the celebration of the Last Supper was the ritual fulfillment of the Passover meal while the Passion was the actual fulfillment of all the expectations of Israel’s salvation. The Passover Sacrifice not only looked back to the original Exodus but also looked forward to the coming exodus—salvation of souls and forgiveness of sin.

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<sup>60</sup> Lk 22:15.

<sup>61</sup> Jn 3:17.

<sup>62</sup> One could argue that the event that contributed most to the chief priests and the Pharisees conspiring to kill Christ was the cleansing of the Temple—the unexpected violence and passion with which our Lord expelled the money changers was so extreme and public that the Jewish authorities were forced, in a sense, to silence His voice and influence. The act probably would have been regarded as an outright challenge both to the religious authorities and to the occupying Roman forces. Such a brazen display could not have been ignored for the risk of others going further in violence and rebellion was too great.

Because of this two-way direction of the Passover observance (and also because of the care the Jews took for the ritual command of the Lord), the ritual that had developed by the First Century was highly predictable, formulaic, and wrapped in symbolism. Dr. Scott Hahn so clearly delineates the flow of the ritual meal<sup>63</sup> that it is worth quoting him at length:

In particular, the Passover meal was divided into four parts, which correspond to the four different cups that were served: First, the preliminary course consisted of a solemn blessing (*kiddush*) pronounced over the first cup of wine, which was followed by a dish of bitter herbs. (This was meant to remind the Jews of the bitterness of Egyptian bondage.) Second, the Passover narrative (see Ex 12) was recited, after which the “Little Hallel” (Ps 113) was sung. This was immediately followed by the drinking of the second cup of wine. Third, the main meal was then served, consisting of lamb and unleavened bread, which preceded the drinking of the third cup of wine, known as the “cup of blessing.” Finally, the climax of the Passover came with the singing of the “Great Hallel” (Ps 114–18) and the drinking of the fourth cup of wine, the “cup of consummation.” Many New Testament scholars see this pattern reflected in the Gospel narratives of the Last Supper. In particular, the cup that Jesus blessed and distributed is identified as the third cup of the Passover Haggadah. This is apparent from the singing of the “Great Hallel” which immediately follows: “And when they had sung a hymn” (Mk 14:26). Paul identifies this “cup of blessing” with the cup of the Eucharist (see 1 Cor 10:16).<sup>64</sup>

The whole ritual was filled with symbolism and references to Scripture. The bitter herbs call to mind the bondage in Egypt. Psalm 113 is a psalm of praise to the eternal might and glory of the Lord. It is fitting that it should be sung just before the sharing of the paschal lamb and unleavened bread, anticipating the commemoration of the great saving act of the Lord leading Israel out of bondage. The Great Hallel begins as a short summary of the liberation of Israel and moves swiftly into more praise for the greatness of the Lord. According to the *Mishnah*, part of

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<sup>63</sup> Also important to note is that in the Jewish custom, the lambs used for the Passover meals were sacrificed at the hands of the priests within the temple and only the priests could do this, unlike the original Passover. Cf. Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), 59-64.

<sup>64</sup> Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 1998), 229. Cf. Pitre, *Eucharist*, 149-158.

the Passover ritual was a dialogue that was intended to make present the events of the original Passover observance.<sup>65</sup> The Jewish concept of remembrance was not simply an intellectual calling to mind of the past events as past; by commemorating the Passover, somehow those past events were made present in a special way to those who were observing the Passover meal: “Although living centuries after the first exodus, the father would speak of the event as if it were something he himself had experienced.”<sup>66</sup> This sense of compressing the timeline is fitting since our Lord was apparently doing the same when He instituted the New Covenant that night in front of His disciples.

At the Last Supper, after the consecration and reception of His Body and Blood, an apparent diversion from the typical ritual that the disciples had known, and after the singing of a hymn as Saint Mark relates,<sup>67</sup> our Lord and His disciples left the table and went out to the Mount of Olives. After the singing of the Great Hallel, the ritual should have continued with the reception of the fourth cup of wine.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, It seems as if this ritual concern was addressed by Christ: “Not only is the omission glaring, it even appears to have been noticed—and highlighted—by Jesus himself, in the preceding verse: “Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mk 14:25). It seems as if Jesus intended *not* to drink what he knew his disciples expected him to drink.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Pitre, *Eucharist*, 64-66.

<sup>66</sup> Pitre, *Eucharist*, 66.

<sup>67</sup> Mk 14:26.

<sup>68</sup> Hahn, *Promises*, 229-230. Cf. Pitre, *Eucharist*, 160-163.

<sup>69</sup> Hahn, *Promises*, 230. (Emphasis in original)

The non-Jewish-ness of the timeline should be striking; like Holy Mass in our own day, the ritual had become predictable and well-ordered. Very little was left up to discretion, so when Christ altered the pattern of behavior for the night perhaps it left the disciples themselves wondering all over again, “How different is this night from all other nights!”<sup>70</sup> Culturally, from the Jewish perspective, Christ had changed the ritual. Only with the benefits of the Holy Spirit and hindsight did the disciples come to understand what our Lord was doing when he was praying His high-priestly prayer in John’s Gospel or giving His disciples a new Covenant in His Blood in the Synoptics. He was completing everything that Israel had been looking toward for millennia. At the time, however, it should be fair to say that the disciples were confounded when the most upstanding and holy Jew they had ever met (Christ) took it upon Himself to change what had been done for centuries:

When the Last Supper is viewed through Jewish eyes, *Jesus did not actually finish his last Passover meal*. This is extremely significant. Jesus not only altered the meal by focusing on his own body and blood rather than the flesh of the paschal lamb. He also seems to have deliberately left the Passover liturgy incomplete, by vowing not to drink of the ‘fruit of the vine’ and by leaving the Upper Room without doing so.<sup>71</sup>

The incompleteness to which Dr. Pitre here refers is not accidental. By the evidence we see, Christ clearly understood what He was doing and what it would all mean later.

We can see hints of the apostles understanding what Christ was doing that night after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost . The best example comes from Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of

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<sup>70</sup> *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, Pesahim, X, 4, D, trans. Jacob Neusner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 250. The question would also be asked by the youngest member at table to the senior member at table during the Passover ritual.

<sup>71</sup> Pitre, *Eucharist*, 162. (Emphasis in original)

Christ?” (1Cor 10:16 *RSV-2CE*) Paul was a learned rabbi and a most observant Pharisee; he didn’t use the phrase “cup of blessing” accidentally.

[Luke] refers to the cup that Jesus identified with his own blood as ‘the cup *after* supper’ (Luke 22:19). In the rabbinic descriptions of the Passover, this could only refer to the *third* cup, the ‘cup of blessing’ (the *berakah*), which was drunk after the meal. We find confirmation for this suggestion in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, written around A.D. 50. In this letter Paul actually refers to the Eucharistic cup of Jesus’ blood using the traditional rabbinic expression for the third cup...<sup>72</sup>

The “cup of blessing” is the third cup and not the fourth. The Apostles were clearly identifying the third cup to correspond with the Blessed Chalice which they used at their early liturgies. But the lack of the fourth cup at the Last Supper still leaves us with a problem. Did our Lord simply omit it altogether or was there a sort of extension of the ritual into fulfillment? Saint Mark relates that Christ was adamant about not drinking the fruit of the vine until He drinks “it new in the kingdom of God.” (Mk 14:25 *DR*)

In each of the three Synoptic Gospels (Mt 27:48, Mk 15:36, Lk 23:36), we are told that while Christ was hanging on the Cross, He was offered vinegar to drink. Remarkably, not one of the three at all relates whether during that time He took any of it. Matthew 27:34 and Mark 15:23 inform us that our Lord was offered wine mixed with a painkiller upon the arrival at the summit of Calvary, and here it is clear that He did not take it after He had tasted what was given Him. Only John makes a comment about whether Christ took any wine while hanging on the Cross:

Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst. Now there was a vessel set there, full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth. Jesus therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated. And bowing his head, he gave up the ghost. (Jn 19:28–30 *DR*)

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<sup>72</sup> Pitre, *Eucharist*, 159.

Our Lord did in fact drink immediately before He perished. It was only after he had taken to drink that He declared that it was finished/completed/consummated. But what is this ‘it’? Hahn and Pitre have the idea that the ‘it’ refers to what Christ had begun and not finished the night before at the Last Supper, as Dr. Hahn said, the “Passover sacrifice should not be separated from Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross; Jesus didn’t finish the Passover until Calvary, where he fulfilled it.”<sup>73</sup> Dr. Pitre goes into more detail about the connection between the two, saying:

When Jesus said, “It is finished,” he was not just referring to his life or his messianic mission. For he did not say it until “he had received the wine.” Why? What does this mean? Once again, when we remember Jesus’ vow at the Last Supper, and his prayer about drinking the ‘cup’ in Gethsemane, then the meaning of Jesus’ last word becomes clear. It means that Jesus did in fact finish the Last Supper. He did it on the cross. He did it at the very moment of his death.<sup>74</sup>

We should note here that Hahn and Pitre are making their argument from a considerably Jewish liturgical perspective. Their way is not the only way, certainly, to interpret what our Lord meant by the ‘it.’ Classically speaking, the interpretation of the *consummatum est* was referring to the whole mission of the Incarnation generally speaking and to the Passion of Christ in particular. Saint Augustine offers his interpretation in this way:

What, but all that prophecy had foretold so long before? And then, because nothing now remained that still required to be done before He died, as if He, who had power to lay down His life and to take it up again,<sup>75</sup> had at length completed all for whose completion He was waiting, “He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Hahn, *Promises*, 234.

<sup>74</sup> Pitre, *Eucharist*, 168.

<sup>75</sup> Jn 10:18

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John*, 119, 6, in *St. Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. John Gibb and James Innes, vol. 7, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 434.

According to Augustine, the consummation spoken of by Christ is that of the whole mission of His life: to lay down His life for the life of the world, which culminated in Him bowing His head to give up the ghost while hanging on the Cross.

What could be said for seeing these two interpretations together and in harmony with one another? If we think about it, the Jewish liturgical interpretation and the Incarnational mission interpretation are not contrary to each other. While we must assert strongly that the interpretation of the Church through Saint Augustine is the foundational interpretation and the literal, the interpretation offered by Hahn and Pitre adds a great amount of cultural depth to us understanding just how special the night of the Last Supper was and another way of it being related to the Passion and Death of our Lord. Fundamentally speaking, the Passover meal celebrated by Christ and His disciples was where Christ gave a new covenant to men. This covenant, celebrated in anticipation to the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, was given through the consecration and offering of unleavened bread and a chalice of wine by our Lord Himself.<sup>77</sup> In itself, it was a complete sacrifice; Christ the Priest offered Himself, God the Father found it acceptable, those participating found benefit from it.

### **Priesthood of Christ**

A priest is ordained to offer sacrifice.<sup>78</sup> He may, in his daily duties, be a counselor, confidant, visitor of the homebound, instructor of the faithful, or guide for sacramental preparation but his primary duty and office is to offer the sacrifice of the Church and of Christ.

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<sup>77</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 5, ad 3, in *Summa Theologiae: Tertia Pars, 60-90*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 350-351.

<sup>78</sup> Thus, the Council of Trent says: "Sacrifice and the priesthood are bound together, therefore, by the regulation of God." DH 1764. ("*Sacrificium et sacerdotium ita Dei ordinatione coniuncta sunt...*")



As Father Ludwig Ott said, “The most essential function of the sacerdotal office is sacrifice.”<sup>79</sup> When he acts *in persona Christi Capitis*, offering the Sacred Mysteries, he is most himself.<sup>80</sup> The ministerial priest is given this power to offer the sacrifice because of his conformity to Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. All power the priest possesses comes not from himself but from Christ through His Church. Even though Holy Mass is also natural sacrifice, as will be discussed later,<sup>81</sup> all power for the sacramental fulfillment of the sacrifice comes from Christ acting as High Priest of the New Testament through the mediation of His ministerial priest.

When asking whether it be fitting for Christ to be considered a priest, Saint Thomas answers, “The office proper to a priest is to be a mediator between God and the people: to wit, inasmuch as He bestows Divine things on the people, wherefore *sacerdos* means a giver of sacred things (*sacra dans*).”<sup>82</sup> The priest is one who speaks on behalf of the people to God and brings the gifts of God to the people.<sup>83</sup> Aquinas argues, following the line of reasoning found in Hebrews 5, that priesthood is proper to Christ in light of His redemptive mission and that His priesthood, in the line of Melchizedek, is higher than all others.

Therefore, if Christ is the High Priest of our redemption, He must have something to offer to God the Father in order to obtain the great favor of salvation for men. No greater gift can there be than to offer infinite forgiveness for an infinite offense against God, thus the gift offered

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<sup>79</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 183. Cf. Heb 8:3.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Hünermann, Helmut Hoping, Robert L. Fastiggi, Anne Englund Nash, and Heinrich Denzinger. *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 4153.

<sup>81</sup> See Chapter 3, *The Mass and the Last Supper*

<sup>82</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 243.

<sup>83</sup> It is fitting, then, that instances in the Roman Missal where the priest is praying in the name of the whole Church, he uses the first-person plural. He brings what the whole Church has put into his hands that God might receive it with pleasure and bestow even greater gifts onto the Church. When it comes time at Holy Mass to give a reminder of the Lord’s presence to those in attendance, he turns about to them with his eyes downcast (indicating that Christ speaks through him) and says to them *Dominus vobiscum*.

in return must be at least equally great. When our Lord died on the Cross on Good Friday, He possessed nothing to offer God save Himself. And this, Himself, is what He offered. So full was His offering, that the Council of Ephesus said Christ “offered himself for us as a fragrant sacrifice to God the Father.”<sup>84</sup> “Fragrant sacrifice” references Ephesians 5:2; the phrase is also evocative of the Holocaust sacrifices being burnt in their entirety in passages such as Exodus 29:18 and Leviticus 8:21. Christ’s sacrifice, His whole self-offering, is the fulfillment and perfection of the Mosaic burnt offerings; He offered Himself wholly and willingly. No longer is the blood of a dumb, non-willing victim necessary. The Son of God has offered His own life and blood for the salvation of men. And all the better are we for it. For God had no need that men be saved. The Son of God had no need to offer Himself in such a manner, but for the great love of God for His creation. As Saint Anselm said famously:

No man except this one ever gave to God what he was not obliged to lose, or paid a debt he did not owe. But he freely offered to the Father what there was no need of his ever losing, and paid for sinners what he owed not for himself. Therefore he set a much nobler example, that each one should not hesitate to give to God, for himself, what he must at any rate lose before long, since it was the voice of reason; for he, when not in want of anything for himself and not compelled by others, who deserved nothing of him but punishment, gave so precious a life, even the life of so illustrious a personage, with such willingness.<sup>85</sup>

The sin was ours and not Christ’s. The debt to be paid belongs to each of us and not Christ. For how much Anselm is attributed as beginning the penal substitution theory of atonement, this paragraph indicates that he also saw the aspect of Christ’s offering of Himself to His Father as an essential and integral component of salvation bought on the Cross. The consequences of sin in

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<sup>84</sup> DH 261.

<sup>85</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, II, 18b, in *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix, In Behalf of the Fool, by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Deane (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1939), 280.

justice indeed take a prominent place, but Anselm seems to be more nuanced than he is often given credit for.

Saint Thomas also understood the necessity of just consequences for the sin of man in his theology of salvation, but indeed he also places much more emphasis on the self-offering of Christ. As we will see, in both his *Commentary on Hebrews* and in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas places what appears to be the foundational emphasis of salvation on Christ's giving of His own life for others.<sup>86</sup>

In his *Commentary on Hebrews*, Aquinas notes the author's use of the term "priest" in relation to Christ's action on the Cross, "He says, priest, because he offered himself to God the Father: he loved us and gave himself for us an oblation and sacrifice to God (*oblationem et hostiam Deo*)."<sup>87</sup> Christ is a priest because He offers something; that something is Himself. The verse Aquinas quotes is Ephesians 5:2. Aquinas worked in the Latin, but the words Saint Paul used in Greek bear the same meaning: oblation/offering and sacrifice/burnt-offering.<sup>88</sup> Our Lord on the Cross is both an oblation and a sacrifice at once. The term oblation in both Latin and Greek connotes more of a sense of a gift to a deity that is offered but not necessarily destroyed, whereas sacrifice nearly always connotes a sense of destruction or death of the victim. Both of these terms, then, are fitting for the Passion; Christ does indeed willingly offer Himself wholeheartedly to God the Father for the salvation of man and verily His death is the

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<sup>86</sup> Indeed, as Father Romanus Cessario said of the relationship between the two works: "The Letter to the Hebrews shapes Aquinas' treatment in the *Summa Theologiae* of Christ's passion." (Romanus Cessario, "Aquinas on Christian Salvation," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 125.)

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, V, 1, 252, trans. Fabian Larcher, ed. Aquinas Institute. (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 113.

<sup>88</sup> See *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "ob-lātio, ōnis;" "hostīa, ae;" and *Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "προσφορά, ἡ;" "θυσία, ἡ."

consummation and completion of that offering of Himself. He alone was worthy of this because of His innocence and purity. He held no stain of sin, but took upon Himself our sins. He was the perfect fulfillment of the Paschal Lamb<sup>89</sup>; no longer was the death of the lamb a representative of the past exodus and an expectation of the future exodus, the Death of the Lamb of God is an exodus not from human slave-masters but from the slavery of sin and demonic slave-masters. All of Christ's saving power comes from this self-giving love (who would offer himself over to death for the life of another without love?). Our Lord said so Himself: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13 *DR*)

However, we should here highlight a distinction between the event of Christ's being crucified and the act of Christ's self-offering. Saint Thomas explains how these two are related but must be understood properly:

The slaying of the Man Christ may be referred to a twofold will. First, to the will of those who slew Him: and in this respect He was not a victim: for the slayers of Christ are not accounted as offering a sacrifice to God, but as guilty of a great crime: a similitude of which was borne by the wicked sacrifices of the Gentiles, in which they offered up men to idols. Secondly, the slaying of Christ may be considered in reference to the will of the Sufferer, Who freely offered Himself to His suffering. In this respect He is a victim, and in this He differs from the sacrifices of the Gentiles.<sup>90</sup>

As Aquinas explains, the actions of the Jews and Romans who conspired to kill and executed Christ do not enter in to the sacrificial reality. Our Lord was not a sacrificial victim because the Jews and Romans nailed Him to a tree. Indeed, they were the agents of Christ's death and they bear the guilt of the deed, but men are not saved because of this crime *simpliciter*. Rather,

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<sup>89</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, VIII, 1, 384, trans. Fabian Larcher, 167.

<sup>90</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 246.

Christ's own will to give Himself over to His suffering, does make Him the worthy victim of sacrifice. He has the power to lay His life down and to take it up again<sup>91</sup> and He did just that on Good Friday through Easter Sunday. Here, then, we have two movements of Christ's will also. As Vincent McNabb said, "[The] internal offering of the Sacrifice of Calvary was the first movement of the created will of Jesus Christ; the external offering or actual giving was the actual Passion and Death of Jesus Christ."<sup>92</sup> We could say that the internal offering was present from the first moment of the Incarnation; God's and the God-man's whole intent was to be offered up and to save men from sin. But naturally, this salvation could not be enacted without the actual carrying-out of the offering and sacrifice.

The passivity and the agency of Christ throughout the whole ordeal must be understood properly. Christ willed to offer Himself up and die, but by no means did He slay Himself. The Savior Himself could not negate the effects of sin by committing suicide and sinning Himself. The particular agents of the death of Christ were the executioners who scourged Him, nailed Him to the Cross, and let Him hang for three hours. But nor is He a human sacrifice. The executioners did not effect the sacrifice. To all the gentiles present, the Crucifixion would look like any other instance of capital punishment. The sacrifice happens because Christ fully wills and allows the executioners to do what they do. His whole will is wrapped up in the giving of His whole being to God the Father for the forgiveness of sin.<sup>93</sup> "In a true sacrifice the sacrificial intent naturally does not embody itself in the rite, which can be performed mechanically, but in the purpose, which lifts the external offering into the spiritual sphere and therefore requires an act of the

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<sup>91</sup> Jn 10:18.

<sup>92</sup> McNabb, "New Theory," 1091. Cf. Alfred Swaby, *The Last Supper and Calvary: A Treatise*, ed. Vincent McNabb (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1926), 53.

<sup>93</sup> Matthew Levering, *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity* (Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2010), 107.

intellect and the will.”<sup>94</sup> Msgr. Pohle wrote this in the context of explaining the Sacrifice of Mass, but his words are equally appropriate in this context. Had Christ not had the will to save, His death would have been without any saving power. It’s not simply the fact that Christ dies, but that He wills Himself to be offered up to the point of death. The unity of the internal will to save and to offer Himself and the external fact of His death make the salvation of the world come about. “Always, *Christus Patiens* is also *Christus Agens*: always, Christ the Victim is also Christ the Priest,” says Msgr. Ronald Knox.<sup>95</sup> The offerer and the one offered are one and the same. The spotless victim is also the worthy priest making the sacrifice to God on behalf of the people. God also is the One offering and God Himself receives the sacrifice and finds it pleasing. Therefore, as Saint Alphonsus said, salvation only began at the Cross but does not end there; it extends through time and continues forever.<sup>96</sup>

The consequences of the Cross continue forever because Christ eternally offers Himself to His Father in heaven.<sup>97</sup> The merits of the Sacrifice were won on the Cross, and Christ’s will, being that of the Incarnate Second Person of the Trinity, is perfect and eternal, and is always that men be saved; He is His own offering. Saint Thomas plunged further into the depths of this mystery when he wrote of two considerations within the office of the priest: the offering and the consummation thereof. In regards to Christ, both of these considerations are ordered towards heaven. The offering is made so that the recipients obtain an eternal good, namely heaven. The consummation consists in Christ entering into His Holy Place, the heaven He won through His

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<sup>94</sup> Pohle, *Sacraments*, 278-279.

<sup>95</sup> Ronald Knox, *Heaven and Charing Cross: Sermons on the Holy Eucharist* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1936), 82.

<sup>96</sup> Liguori, *Eucharist*, 22.

<sup>97</sup> Liguori, *Eucharist*, 23.

Sacrifice, which was foreshadowed by the Aaronic priest entering the Holy of Holies<sup>98</sup> on the Day of Atonement.<sup>99</sup> In both of these ways, we can say that the priesthood of Christ is eternal: both have their end in heaven. Christ's offering is for the obtaining of heaven by others and Christ's consummation is also in heaven, which was symbolized by the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple.

Another and simpler reason for the eternity of Christ's priesthood is noted by Dr. Matthew Levering and found in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "His 'sacrifice of himself' (Hebrews 9:26) also possesses eternal expiatory power because, as the Son of God, he conquers death and thereby 'holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he only lives to make intercession for them' (Hebrews 7:24-25)."<sup>100</sup> This conclusion is the logical consequence of the Resurrection. Christ has won eternal life for others and possesses His own life perfectly. Therefore, Christ holds the power to bring men to Himself since His whole purpose was to do just that. Through another insight by Aquinas, we may put a finer point on this. "The Saints who will be in heaven will not need any further expiation by the priesthood of Christ, but having been expiated, they will need consummation through Christ Himself, on Whom their glory depends, as is written: *The glory of God hath enlightened it*—that is, the city of the Saints—and *the Lamb is the lamp thereof*. (Rev 21:23)"<sup>101</sup> Christ's glory is the foundation for the glory present in all the saints. They who are in heaven need no more of His cleansing and healing, but they are always

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<sup>98</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 801.

<sup>99</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 5, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 250.

<sup>100</sup> Levering, *Priesthood*, 61-62.

<sup>101</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 5, ad 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 250.

dependent on Him for the making present of the victory.<sup>102</sup> Our Lord won the battle over sin in each of His blessed ones and so celebrates eternally the victory in them.

Christ's priesthood is eternal but was foreshadowed in time through two key Old Testament figures: the priest/king Melchizedek and the priesthood of Aaron. Both of these figures are critical to understanding both the singularity and the continuity of Christ's priesthood. In this respect, Saint Thomas once again utilizes the offering/partaking distinction within the priesthood of our Lord.<sup>103</sup> Regarding the act of offering itself, the Aaronic priesthood is the clearer figure because both sacrifices involved the shedding of the blood of the victim. On the other hand, the priesthood of Melchizedek is the clearer figure regarding the partaking element, which he reasons is the higher element because of the grace bestowed through it. As the participants were able to partake of the offering of Melchizedek, we are able to partake of the offering of Christ and His merits—and through the same elements used by the King of Salem, no less. Dr. Levering also helps to give a greater insight into the reasoning of Aquinas, linking the Dominican's thought with that of Augustine. "Following Augustine's view that the many grains united in the bread and the many grapes united in the wine symbolize the unity of the Church, Aquinas argues that the Levitical Priesthood symbolizes sacrifice (through the shedding of blood), while Melchizedek's priesthood symbolizes Communion (through the bread and wine)."<sup>104</sup> Within the bread and wine there are simultaneously unity and diversity. The many grains and grapes are brought together to form wholes of bread and wine, greater than they could be individually. The sentiment is also evocative of Saint Paul's admonition in Galatians 3:28 that

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<sup>102</sup> Levering, *Priesthood*, 99.

<sup>103</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 6, ad 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 251-252.

<sup>104</sup> Levering, *Priesthood*, 117.



there is no longer Gentile nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female when it comes to unity in Christ's merits.

We must remember, however, that the figure does not rise to the level of equality with the reality. The Aaronic priesthood is a figure, albeit an important one, but a figure. It resembles the priesthood of Christ, but also important is that it does not resemble Christ's priesthood.<sup>105</sup> The Aaronic priesthood was instituted by God to make a limited atonement for sins and also to imbue the imagination of Israel with the ordered adoration of the Lord which was also imperfect since the children of Abraham did not always understand why God ordained His worship as He did. "A figure cannot equal the reality, wherefore the figural priest of the Old Law could not attain to such perfection as not to need a sacrifice of satisfaction. But Christ did not stand in need of this. Consequently, there is no comparison between the two."<sup>106</sup> Christ, the priest-victim, did not require the atoning effect of His sacrifice, He already possessed the perfection by nature of His divine origin as the Incarnate Second Person of the Trinity. By virtue of this perfection, He could raise up fallen humanity to the state of perfection bought by His sacrifice of satisfaction.

So powerful is the Sacrifice of Christ, that His saving act is a once-for-all saving act. No longer are there a cycles of various sacrifices looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises,<sup>107</sup> the Church now participates in the one, perfect, and singular Sacrifice of Christ. One might ask, however, whether the sacrifices of the Old Law were all for nothing and hollow. Saint Thomas says that they were not entirely empty of effect.<sup>108</sup> In regard to their ability to remit the sin and heal the conscience, they were impotent; Hebrews 10:4 is quite clear on this point: "It is

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<sup>105</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 6, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 251.

<sup>106</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 4, ad 3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 249.

<sup>107</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 728.

<sup>108</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, IX, 2, 430, trans. Fabian Larcher, 189.

impossible that with the blood of the oxen and goats sin should be taken away.” On the other hand, the old sacrifices did have a cleansing effect in regard to the ministration of divine worship. The sacrifices were ordered so that those who offered them might offer them in a worthy manner, in this way, they were able to cleanse. Christ’s priesthood is clearly greater for the reason that His sacrifice cleanses in both manners. His sacrifice makes the participants worthy to gather and celebrate even more so because His Death on the Cross heals the soul and makes men perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. Msgr. Pohle says, in even stronger language, alluding to the inadequacy of all sacrifices before that of Christ, “The most perfect, in fact the only true bloody sacrifice, in matter as well as form, was that offered on the Cross by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was both the sacrificing minister and the sacrificial lamb.”<sup>109</sup> All other sacrifices, whether those of Israel or Gentiles, were noble imitations<sup>110</sup> of the perfect sacrifice of Christ, which could effect what the others looked forward to or symbolized.

However, Melchizedek, king of Salem, and his offering of bread and wine outshone the Levitical priesthood and preceded it. Saint Thomas said, in explaining the relation between the two:

Now the excellence of Christ’s [priesthood] over the Levitical priesthood was foreshadowed in the priesthood of Melchisedech, who received tithes from Abraham,<sup>111</sup> in whose loins the priesthood of the Law was tithed. Consequently the priesthood of Christ is said to be *according to the order of Melchisedech*, on account of the excellence of the true priesthood over the figural priesthood of the Law.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Pohle, *Sacraments*, 290.

<sup>110</sup> Their greater or lesser nobility depended, of course, very much on how ordered they were to the mind of God. The point here is that *qua sacrifice* the Jewish and pagan sacrifices were noble because they looked for the forgiveness they knew they needed and could not obtain. In no way should we equate the human sacrifices of Carthage or the Aztecs, both of which clearly cried out to God for vengeance to the worthy holocausts accepted by God under Aaron and Moses.

<sup>111</sup> Gen 14:20, Heb 7:4-10.

<sup>112</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 6, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 251.

It is the tithes that Abraham paid to the king of Salem that demonstrate that the Levitical priesthood was one subservient to another, as it was said in Hebrews 7. Levi, and all of Israel, was in the loins of Abraham at the time of the blessing by Melchizedek. As the lesser man gives tithes and honor to the greater and the greater bestows blessings, so did the lesser priesthood give way in time to the more excellent. Abraham here is the representative of his whole line which was to come according to God's promise.<sup>113</sup> Clearly, Isaac, Jacob, and Levi had not been born at that point but they are his descendants and are bound to him and to those to whom he gave honor. It is on account, said Saint Thomas, of the authority of Melchizedek over Abraham that the former's priesthood is the more excellent a figure over that of the Levitical priesthood. Responding to an objection, Saint Thomas makes the point even clearer, "Christ is said to be according to the order of Melchisedech not as though the latter were a more excellent priest, but because he foreshadowed the excellence of Christ's over the Levitical priesthood."<sup>114</sup> We know very little of Melchizedek, apart from what the few verses of Holy Writ tell us. But what Aquinas said is insightful: it is not as if the king of Salem was a more excellent priest than Aaron or Levi or any of their descendants but that his priesthood was the more excellent figure of the priesthood of Christ; both the king of Salem and our Lord offered bread and wine. Above all other words interpreting Scripture, we have the words of the Council of Trent clearly proclaiming a concise summary of the relationship between the priesthood of Christ and His priestly figures:

Since under the former Testament (as the Apostle Paul bears witness) there was no consummation because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood, it was

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<sup>113</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, VII, 2, 346, trans. Fabian Larcher, ed. Aquinas Institute (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

<sup>114</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 6, ad 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 251.

necessary (God the Father of mercies ordaining it thus) that another priest according to the order of Melchisedech (Gen 14:18; Ps 109:4; Heb 7:11) arise, our Lord Jesus Christ, who could perfect (Heb 10:14) all who were to be sanctified, and lead them to perfection.<sup>115</sup>

The Old Law was insufficient in its ability to purify the soul and heal sin, therefore it was necessary for Melchizedek to be another and more primary figure for the priesthood of our Lord; He ministers according to the order of Melchizedek and holds in His power the perfect ability to forgive sin and heal the soul.

Keeping all these figures in mind, it is supremely important to remember that Christ's power to forgive is in virtue of the Cross and the Hypostatic Union. Whenever Christ acts according to His human nature, His divine nature also acts and vice versa. Christ possesses two wills, one human and one divine, and they act in perfect congruity. There is nothing in the actions of Christ where His two wills do not move in harmony. When it comes to the saving act of our Lord, His power is wrapped up in both aspects of His person, as Aquinas said, referencing the Council of Ephesus:

Although Christ was a priest, not as God, but as man, yet one and the same was both priest and God. Wherefore in the Council of Ephesus (Par. III., Cap. I., Anath. x.) we read: *If anyone say that the very Word of God did not become our High-Priest and Apostle, as though this were to be said of another one, the man born of a woman, let him be anathema.* Hence in so far as His human nature operated by virtue of the Divine, that sacrifice was most efficacious for the blotting out of sins.<sup>116</sup>

When we speak of the priesthood of Christ, we are speaking primarily of His human action in saving us. But this is not the whole story, whatever the human nature operates, so operates the

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<sup>115</sup> DH 1739.

<sup>116</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 3, ad 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 247.

divine nature. And because the man Jesus Christ is both God and man, He operates perfectly the sacrifice that can forgive sin and heal the soul. “The priestly act of Christ is a human act foundationally, but all acts of Christ are acts of the Son of God, therefore the saving victimhood is enacted by the one Divine person of Jesus.”<sup>117</sup> It can be put no plainer than this: Christ’s human power to save is enabled by His divine nature, but the human power is not subsumed or negated because the divine power is infinite.

### **Sacrifice and Atonement**

An understanding of the figures of Christ’s priesthood is necessary but even more essential to understanding Christ’s priesthood is what the effect of the sacrifice actually was. As stated above,<sup>118</sup> the mode of Christ’s sacrifice was His self-offering to the Father on the Cross, hence Saint Thomas said, “Christ’s Passion was indeed a malefice on His slayers’ part; but on His own it was the sacrifice of one suffering out of charity. Hence it is Christ Who is said to have offered this sacrifice, and not the executioners.”<sup>119</sup> The executioners did form an integral part of Good Friday but not the most necessary. Had Christ not willingly laid down His own life to His Father, His Death would have been to no avail. But the effects of that Death and Sacrifice must be discussed further.

Catholic theology holds to particular definitions when it comes to the effects of the Passion called Atonement and Satisfaction but an understanding of the more general definitions used in non-Soteriological contexts is useful here, because the terms came out of an earlier Roman legal heritage. “By atonement we understand the reparation of any wrong or injury, either

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<sup>117</sup> Levering, *Priesthood*, 114, n. 151.

<sup>118</sup> See p. 29ff.

<sup>119</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 48, a. 3, ad 3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 519.

material (*damnum*) or moral (*offensa, iniuria*). Material injury demands restitution; moral injury can be repaired only by satisfaction or atonement in the strict sense of the term. The Roman Catechism defines ‘satisfaction’ as ‘nothing else than compensation for an injury offered to another.’”<sup>120</sup> The Old Testament offers a clear account of human restitution and satisfaction in Exodus 21 and 22. In those chapters are offered laws of all kinds of cause, from “If men quarrel, and the one strike his neighbour with a stone or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: If he rise again and walk abroad upon his staff, he that struck him shall be quit, yet so that he make restitution for his work, and for his expenses upon the physicians” (Ex 21:18-19 *DR*) to “If a man deliver money, or any vessel unto his friend to keep, and they be stolen away from him that received them: if the thief be found he shall restore double.” (Ex 22:7 *DR*) The purpose of these casuistic laws was to ensure a just procedure and punishment that can be applied consistently to cases. Different cases require different modes of atonement. If cases are accidental, as in the case of injury by a work animal, there is often a lesser penalty than if the accident is caused by deliberate negligence or outright malicious will. One who injures a servant who lives must pay for loss of work and also medical bills. That is the form of restitution or atonement. In cases where the consequences are graver, a larger restoration or satisfaction is in order, in the above case, double the worth of the stolen goods.

Following the definition offered by the *Roman Catechism*, satisfaction is required when there is will involved in the offense. Restitution appears to be used more often in cases of simple accident or somewhat uncontrollable or unwilled circumstances. When we come finally to a specific definition used in the case of the Passion, Msgr. Pohle offers one that builds on the more

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<sup>120</sup> Joseph Pohle, *Soteriology: A Dogmatic Treatise on the Redemption*, ed. Arthur Preuss (St. Louis: Herder Book Company, 1919), 35.

general one offered above: “Atonement, in the sense in which the term is used in Soteriology, presupposes an offence committed against, or an injury done to, God. It is for our sins that God demands satisfaction. Sin and satisfaction are consequently correlative terms, or, to put it more accurately, they are antitheses clamoring for reconciliation.”<sup>121</sup> This sin, naturally, begins with Original Sin but it also extends to personal sin for those who have reached the age of reason. What Christ did on the Cross was to take upon Himself the burden of our sin and offer Himself as a satisfying offering to the Father on our behalf, since we noted above<sup>122</sup> that Christ’s perfect will could achieve such an offering and such an effect. He offered Himself to pay the debt owed for sin in our stead, or vicariously, but here we must be careful what we mean by that word:

The notion of *vicariatio* does not imply that he who acts as substitute or representative for another takes upon himself the other’s guilt or sin as such. No one can be the bearer or subject of another’s sins. In this erroneous sense vicarious atonement involves a contradiction, because no mediator can give satisfaction for another’s sins unless he is himself sinless. Vicarious atonement, therefore, can only mean the voluntary assumption of a punishment due to sin,—not indeed the *reatus poenæ*, which implies real guilt, but the penance imposed by God. In other words, the Godman renders infinite satisfaction in our stead, and this satisfaction by its objective worth counterbalances our infinite offence and is accepted by God as though it were given by ourselves.<sup>123</sup>

Herein lies the distinctive characteristic of the Catholic theology of salvation. We lay aside all notions of penal substitution or other such innovations and hold to the vicarious atonement where Christ, being sinless, takes upon Himself the burden of our guilt and natural consequences of the infinite disobedience of sin. He offers Himself in the place of our punishment. Christ does not apply our sin as such to Himself, for if He had our sin He would be unable to make perfect satisfaction. Instead, His sinlessness enables Him to offer the perfect recompense to the Father

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<sup>121</sup> Pohle, *Soteriology*, 36.

<sup>122</sup> See p. 29ff.

<sup>123</sup> Pohle, *Soteriology*, 37-38.

for the act of disobedience which is accepted by the Father as though we had made the offering ourselves.

Satisfaction has been a part of the Church's understanding of the Crucifixion from the beginning. Saint Paul was emphatic in his letters of the importance of the Cross: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law: That he might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons," (Gal 4:4-5 *DR*) and "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it: That he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." (Eph 5:25-27 *DR*) Paul offered to his listeners the seed form of satisfaction making the point that Christ came to redeem a fallen humanity from the clutches of sin and death and in so doing, He made His Church holy and without blemish. His offering was pure and His redemption of the Church causes her to be pure as He is. Hidden in the Apostle's thinking is the clear need of a debt owed for disobedience and a stain that must be wiped clean.

The faith of Paul and all the Apostles and the whole early Church was attested to in the Creed promulgated by the First Nicene Council, which attests that the Son of God, "who for our salvation came down and became flesh, and was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day..."<sup>124</sup>In both the Greek<sup>125</sup> and the Latin<sup>126</sup> versions of the Creed, the terms for 'salvation' have senses of safety and preservation and not only salvation *simpliciter*. By the time

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<sup>124</sup> DH 125.

<sup>125</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "σωτηρία, ἴη."

<sup>126</sup> *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "sālūs, ūtis."



Ecclesiastical Latin developed, *salus* came to possess a much more technical meaning but the other senses still remain. Whether in the Greek or Latin, the Nicene Fathers attested, or at least implied,<sup>127</sup> that Christ's act of saving was not one simply of imputing a certain judgment on the souls of the saved or on the Church as a whole. A wide range of other legal terms, even in Greek, could certainly have been used to imply that form of redemption or ransom. The ransom of Christ was different. His was a salvation that changed and healed really those who were its object.

Such a change is affirmed by the Council of Trent. Two places merit careful attention: the second and fourth chapters of the Sixth Session.

He was sent that the Jews, who were under the law, might be redeemed and that the Gentiles "who were not pursuing righteousness" might attain it and that all "might receive adoption as sons". God has "put him forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith", for our sins and "not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world".<sup>128</sup>

In these words a description is outlined of the justification of the sinner as being a transition from the state in which man is born a son of the first Adam to the state of grace and adoption as sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior. After the promulgation of the gospel, this transition cannot take place without the bath of regeneration or the desire for it, as it is written: "Unless one is reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God".<sup>129</sup>

In chapter one of the Sixth Session, the council affirms what Saint Paul taught the Ephesians: that those who have lost innocence due to Original Sin are children of wrath by nature.<sup>130</sup> Those who are not regenerated by Baptism are enemies of God and are slaves of sin and Satan. It is

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<sup>127</sup> To be fair, the subject of salvation was not at issue at the council, the subject of Christ's nature was. The point here is that the Nicene Fathers assumed something about salvation by the Cross that would be clearly defined later on by subsequent councils.

<sup>128</sup> DH 1522.

<sup>129</sup> DH 1524.

<sup>130</sup> Eph 2:3.

significant that Saint Paul uses the term nature<sup>131</sup> in the dative case in this verse. The non-baptized are not children of wrath by imputation or recognition or consequence or choice of God or wrath of God or any other exterior label but by nature. The opposition to God is rendered in man's fallen nature, his marred being, darkened intellect, his weakened will. As the council continues, the justification of Christ by His Blood is what gives men their "adoption as sons." If the opposition to God goes to the nature of men, then it stands to reason that this adoption, as Saint Paul says, must also go to the level of human nature. No one gives adoption to an enemy unless he is reconciled to friendship. The council describes baptism, which is a participation on the death of Christ<sup>132</sup>, as a transition from one state into another. This transition is no simple imputation of righteousness. Baptism into the Death of Christ changes those who undergo it. Once an enemy, then a friend and adopted son. It is the son of a father who receives his inheritance. We become adopted sons of God and receive the inheritance of God our Father: His very life and Saving Grace.

The dogma of the Church being clear, it is fitting to ask the following question of how the atonement operated through the Passion of Christ. For a comprehensive treatise, Saint Thomas outlines his thought in Questions 46-50 of the *Summa Theologiæ: Tertia Pars*. We have not the space to afford a full commentary on the treatise; selections from Questions 46 and 48 are worth highlighting when dealing specifically with satisfaction and atonement.

The first detail to note about Saint Thomas on the Passion, is that he balances carefully its relation both to God's justice and mercy: "That man should be delivered by Christ's Passion was in keeping with both His mercy and His justice. With His justice, because by His Passion Christ

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<sup>131</sup> In the Greek: φύσις.

<sup>132</sup> Rom 6:3-8.

made satisfaction for the sin of the human race; and so man was set free by Christ's justice: and with His mercy, for since man of himself could not satisfy for the sin of all human nature."<sup>133</sup> In redeeming the human race to Himself, God was at once just and merciful. The Passion satisfied God's justice because of Christ's innocent and loving offering of Himself on our behalf and it satisfied God's mercy because we through ourselves could not make the just satisfaction for our sin. Keeping this balance in mind throughout the reading of Aquinas on this topic will aid the reader in understanding the thought of Aquinas.

Question 46, article 3 deals specifically with the suitability of delivering humanity through the Passion of Christ. The reply of Saint Thomas is characteristically well-rounded. He gives five answers for the suitability of the Passion:

Among means to an end that one is the more suitable whereby the various concurring means employed are themselves helpful to such end. But in this that man was delivered by Christ's Passion, many other things besides deliverance from sin concurred for man's salvation. In the first place, man knows thereby how much God loves him, and is thereby stirred to love Him in return, and herein lies the perfection of human salvation; hence the Apostle says (Rom 5:8): *God commendeth His charity towards us; for when as yet we were sinners ... Christ died for us*. Secondly, because thereby He set us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and the other virtues displayed in the Passion, which are requisite for man's salvation. Hence it is written (1Pet 2:21): *Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps*. Thirdly, because Christ by His Passion not only delivered man from sin, but also merited justifying grace for him and the glory of bliss, as shall be shown later (III, q. 48, a. 1; q. 49, arts. 1, 5). Fourthly, because man is all the more bound to refrain from sin, when he bears in mind that he has been redeemed by Christ's blood, according to 1 Cor. 6:20: *You are bought with a great price: glorify and bear God in your body*. Fifth, because it redounded to man's greater dignity, that as man was overcome and deceived by the devil, so also it should be a man that should overthrow the devil; and as man deserved death, so a man by dying should vanquish death. Hence it is written (1Cor 15:57): *Thanks be to God Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was accordingly more

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<sup>133</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 46, a. 1, ad 3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 481.

fitting that we should be delivered by Christ's Passion than simply by God's good-will.<sup>134</sup>

The first reason Aquinas gives is the display of love. God's love for man is shown in an exemplary manner through the Passion of Christ. His love for fallen humanity is so extensive that He withheld not even His own Son, co-equal and co-eternal with Himself. It is by the Passion that we may best and most clearly understand how much God loves us and how serious our sins are to Him. Sin is a matter of life and death and God loved us unto death; the Cross is an invitation for us to love God in return with the same will and intensity. Aquinas quotes Saint Paul, that it is charity that unites God to redeemed men. The second reason is like the first, that it sets an example for us who have received the effects of the Cross. In humility, obedience, justice, etc. we are to follow the example Christ has laid before us. If we are to be saved, we must follow Christ's commands, one of which was to take up our own cross and to follow Him. The third reason is that the Passion is the instrument through which Christ merited justifying grace for us. Aquinas references a later article (III, q. 48, a. 1), in which he demonstrates Christ's merit on behalf of His body, the Church. Christ's merit flows from Himself and to His members (each one of us) just as any of a man's actions, when in the state of grace, can be attributed to his own members. As head of the Mystical Body, Christ's good work redounds to our benefit and we participate in that work. The fourth reason is that the prohibition from sin has been raised to an even higher level when one considers the high price for which his salvation was bought. We know this intuitively. A child takes care of his possessions better when he has a sense of the value in them, when he sees the care and effort his parents put into obtaining or making something for him. The same is true for our salvation; Christ's blood was a high price indeed.

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<sup>134</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 46, a. 3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 483-484.

The final reason given by Aquinas for the suitability of Christ's Passion is one of fitting instrumentality. Man was the cause of evil and death in the world, so a man should also be the one to restore the order that was lost. Humanity earned death as a consequence of sin, so the Perfect Man should merit the destruction of death by dying. Christ is the hinge between life and death; through Him, we also participate in that reality—of Christ's vanquishing of death and defeat of Satan.

Conveniently, Aquinas does ask directly the question of whether salvation came about by Christ through Atonement in Question 48, article 2:

He properly atones for an offense who offers something which the offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offence. But by suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offence of the whole human race. First of all, because of the exceeding charity from which He suffered; secondly, on account of the dignity of His life which He laid down in atonement, for it was the life of One Who was God and man; thirdly, on account of the extent of the Passion, and the greatness of the grief endured, as stated above (Q. 46, A. 6). And therefore Christ's Passion was not only a sufficient but a superabundant atonement for the sins of the human race; according to 1 John 2:2: *He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*<sup>135</sup>

Aquinas is emphatic here; rarely do we see him go farther than what the question specifically asks in the *Summa*. Not only does Christ's self-offering in the Passion and Death on the Cross atone for the sin of humanity, it is superabundant. Christ's gift goes above and beyond the strict command of justice and flows higher into the overflowing river of charity. Simple atonement, Aquinas says, requires the debtor to offer something of equal or greater value and the worth of the offense; but by offering Himself, Christ gave more than what was strictly required by justice. Saint Thomas gives three reasons for this. First, and simplest, is by reason of Christ's love. The

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<sup>135</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 48, a. 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 517.

love of our Lord for both His Father and us is the cause of the superabundant atoning character of the Sacrifice. Secondly, the life of Christ was worth infinitely more than what was necessary to save—He was the God-man, a divine person, not only human but the Word of God enfleshed. If even a simple man were able to reconcile himself to God through his own self offering, he would not be able to save the human race let alone all of the created order. Christ's nature enabled Him to recapitulate all creation to Himself and restore the order between God and men. Thirdly, Christ's Passion demonstrates that He suffered greatly and far more on the way to Calvary than was strictly necessary. Christ could have allowed Himself to be hung within the confines of the Roman garrison where Pilate resided. There would have been no long journey and the deed would have been accomplished in much less time but Christ did not have it so. His Father willed that He die outside the city walls not only symbolically to aid our understanding of His Death as a sacrifice, but Christ also allowed His grief to be increased for the sake of those of us who now look upon the journey and contemplate the suffering. Christ's exceeding of strict justice is what makes His sacrifice not only atoning, but superabundantly so.

Returning to the theme of sacrifice, the following article in Question 48 addresses specifically whether the operation of the Passion was through the mode of sacrifice. Saint Thomas answers in the affirmative, saying:

*A sacrifice properly so called is something done for that honour which is properly due to God, in order to appease Him: and hence it is that Augustine says (De Civ. Dei x.): A true sacrifice is every good work done in order that we may cling to God in holy fellowship, yet referred to that consummation of happiness wherein we can be truly blessed. But, as is added in the same place, Christ offered Himself up for us in the Passion: and this voluntary enduring of the Passion was most acceptable to God, as coming from charity. Therefore it is manifest that Christ's Passion was a true sacrifice. Moreover, as Augustine says farther on in the same book, the primitive sacrifices of the holy Fathers were many and various signs of this true sacrifice, one being prefigured by many, in the same way as a single concept of thought is expressed in many words, in order to commend it without*

*tediousness: and, as Augustine observes (De Trin. iv.), since there are four things to be noted in every sacrifice—to wit, to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered, what is offered, and for whom it is offered—that the same one true Mediator reconciling us with God through the peace-sacrifice might continue to be one with Him to Whom He offered it, might be one with them for whom He offered it, and might Himself be the offerer and what He offered.*<sup>136</sup>

Aquinas draws heavily on Saint Augustine here. Important to note here is that the language of offering is also language of sacrifice for both these saints. Saint Thomas gives Augustine's general principle, but also allows him to make the finer point that the exemplary sacrifice was that of our Lord in His Passion and Death of offering Himself out of complete charity being *most acceptable (maxime acceptum)* to God the Father. Hence, not only was the Passion a sacrifice, it is the truest sacrifice, as Thomas continues, referencing Augustine: Christ is the offerer, the offered, the means by whom we may be united with God, and the means by whom we might be fully united to each other since He offered Himself for us, since every sacrifice holds in its end these four objects. Concluding where Aquinas began, a sacrifice is done for the honor of the one to whom the sacrifice is offered. Christ's act is fully exemplary of this definition. Our Lord offered Himself on our behalf, surely, but it was primarily an offering to manifest the glory and power of God who could forgive sins and chose to forgive them in this manner and to appease His justice, which required fitting satisfaction for the offense.

Finally, the question must be addressed, since the term is so frequently used biblically as well as historically in theology, whether salvation through the Passion was also a redemption. Aquinas gives two reasons in his response:

Man was held captive on account of sin in two ways: first of all, by the bondage of sin, because (John 8:34): *Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*; and (2 Pet 2:19): *By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave*. Since,

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<sup>136</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 48, a. 3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 518.

then, the devil had overcome man by inducing him to sin, man was subject to the devil's bondage. Secondly, as to the debt of punishment, to the payment of which man was held fast by God's justice: and this, too, is a kind of bondage, since it savours of bondage for a man to suffer what he does not wish, just as it is the free man's condition to apply himself to what he wills. Since, then, Christ's Passion was a sufficient and a superabundant atonement for the sin and the debt of the human race, it was as a price at the cost of which we were freed from both obligations. For the atonement by which one satisfies for self or another is called the price, by which he ransoms himself or someone else from sin and its penalty, according to Dan 4:24: *Redeem thou thy sins with alms*. Now Christ made satisfaction, not by giving money or anything of the sort, but by bestowing what was of greatest price—Himself—for us. And therefore Christ's Passion is called our redemption.<sup>137</sup>

The first answer Saint Thomas gives is heavily biblical. Sin and bondage are nearly synonymous in Sacred Scripture. Secondly, when an offense is committed, there is naturally a debt to be paid to the one offended. This is also a form of bondage, since a free man is not in debt to another, while an offender is in debt to another. Aquinas has already established two articles earlier that Christ's Passion was a superabundant atonement for both of these forms of bondage. The fruits of Christ's Passion are freedom from the debt of punishment and the grace to overcome sin and the power of Satan. These fruits were obtained, as Aquinas says, once again, by Christ's own offering of Himself—this time as the price of ransom for debt. Hence, Saint Thomas concludes that our salvation is also fittingly called a redemption.

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<sup>137</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 48, a. 4, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 520.



## Chapter 3: Holy Mass

### The Mass and The Last Supper

We now proceed to the final topic at hand: to speak about the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in its own right. Considering what has been discussed above,<sup>138</sup> it would be wise to offer another caveat and word of caution from Abbot Vonier:

We must approach the question of what is contained in this sacrament through the signs that constitute the sacrament, and not vice versa. It would be quite an erroneous proceeding to say first that the Body and Blood of Christ are contained in the sacrament, and to conclude from this to the sacrifice. Such is not the sacramental proceeding. Our method ought to be quite other. Let us take the signs, both as things and as words; examine these signs, and see whether they do really signify a sacrifice; if they do signify a sacrifice, then there is a sacrifice, according to the universal adage in this matter that the Christian sacraments do what they signify: *Sacramenta efficiunt quod significat*.<sup>139</sup>

Vonier offers these words of caution to warn his readers of his own method. His words are applicable to our topic here, too. In this chapter, we will begin to look at the Mass by its natural signs and relationship with both the Last Supper and the Passion on Calvary. To place the sacramental-ness of the Mass and the Eucharist before its natural signs is to have the cart pull the horse. The Holy Sacrifice possesses its own intelligible signs that properly point to its signification. Indeed, these signs are both in word and in deed. The elevations are signs. The Offertory is a sign. The extension of the hands over the gifts is a sign. The clearest sign, of course, is to double consecration of the sacred species—here is the culmination of the sacrifice. Without these signs and others, the sacramental nature of the Eucharist would be unintelligible.

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<sup>138</sup> See p. 22ff.

<sup>139</sup> Vonier, *Eucharist*, 63-64.

In the matter of signification, Mass receives its clearest direction from the manner in which Christ celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples. As noted above, the Passover meal descended through the ages to Christ's time with a standard set of rubrics. Our Lord's deviation from them surely turned the heads of the Twelve; He said so Himself, giving them a 'new covenant'<sup>140</sup> in His Blood. The new testament that Christ gave to His disciples that night, however, was accompanied by the command to do it in remembrance of Him. Over the course of the centuries, this same command has been obeyed by first Christ's Apostles and then by their successors emanating down to our own time. It is through the Sacrifice of the Mass in the West and the Divine Liturgy in the East that our Lord's command at the Last Supper is obeyed by the Church. "Regarding the relation between the Mass and the Last Supper, we may add that both sacrifices are identical in object and subject (Christ) as well as in the manner of offering. It is perfectly correct, therefore, to say that the Last Supper was the first Mass, though there are a few non-essential distinctions between the two."<sup>141</sup> Pohle, continuing, lists three distinctions that must be kept in mind. First, that the Last Supper was offered by Christ in an anticipatory manner to His Passion and Death, whereas the Mass is celebrated retrospectively, that is, looking back at the past event of the Passion. Second, Christ Himself offered the Sacrifice at the Last Supper whereas He uses the mediation of His ordained priest at Mass. Third, the Last Supper is properly the institution and the exemplary pattern of the thing, while the Mass that which is done in obedience to a command and imitates the pattern.<sup>142</sup> Msgr. Pohle places the essential act of the Sacrifice of the Mass in the double consecration of the elements on the altar and in neither the offertory nor the communion, though he does hold that these three hold preeminence within the

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<sup>140</sup> Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20.

<sup>141</sup> Pohle, *Sacraments*, 339.

<sup>142</sup> Pohle, *Sacraments*, 339-340.

Mass.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, we shall begin by exploring this threefold preeminence and then in the next section turn to consider the greater relationship between the Mass and its relationship to sacrifice more broadly.

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote before Msgr. Pohle, but consonantly with him, that the Offertory is an integral part of the Mass of the Elect. He mentions, as Pohle mentions, the same three parts that are most worthy to be mentioned when considering the Sacrifice and Sacrament of the altar:

So then, after the people have been prepared and instructed, the next step is to proceed to the celebration of the mystery, which is both offered as a sacrifice, and consecrated and received as a sacrament: since first we have the oblation; then the consecration of the matter offered; and thirdly, its reception. In regard to the oblation, two things are done, namely, the people's praise in singing the *offertory*, expressing the joy of the offerers, and the priest's prayer asking for the people's oblation to be made acceptable to God.<sup>144</sup>

The words “oblation, consecration, and reception” are either the same or synonymous with the words of Pohle above. Through 700 years of historical development, these three parts of the Mass have stood the test as integral and important regarding the sacrifice taking place. Aquinas mentions specifically that two things happen during the oblation: the people's singing of the Offertory verse and the recitation of the Offertory prayer by the celebrant. The singing of the Offertory verse is interesting to mention here. Perhaps it is an implicit highlighting of the participation of the faithful in the Sacred Mysteries. At any rate, the Offertory verse as a proper part of the Mass is of ancient origin in the Roman Liturgy and is the part that will take our attention here.

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<sup>143</sup> Pohle, *Sacraments*, 340ff.

<sup>144</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 4, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 344-345.

The key feature of the Offertory is that the Church, through the mediation of the priest, asks God to make acceptable the offerings the faithful have made to Him and thus accept them. It is unclear whether, during his explanations of the Mass, Aquinas is commenting specifically on the prayers contained in the Dominican Mass or on the prayers contained in the Roman Mass. At any rate, even though the two offertory prayers are different, both nevertheless include the language necessary to make the point.

*Dominican: Suscipe, sancta Trinitas, hanc oblationem, quam tibi offero in memoriam passionis Domini nostri Jesu Christi; et præsta ut in conspectu tuo tibi placens ascendat, et meam et omnium fidelium salutem operetur æternam.*<sup>145</sup>

*Roman: Súscipe, sancta Trínitas, hanc oblatiónem, quam tibi offérimus ob memóriam passionis, resurrectionis et ascensionis Iesu Christi Dómini nostri: et in honórem beátæ Mariæ semper Vírginis, et beáti Ioánnis Baptístæ, et sanctórum Apostolórum Petri et Pauli, et istórum, et ómnium Sanctórum: ut illis proficiat ad honórem, nobis autem ad salútem: et illi pro nobis intercédere dignéntur in cælis, quorum memóriam ágimus in terris. Per eúndem Christum Dóminum nostrum. Amen.*<sup>146</sup>

As can be seen clearly, the Dominican Offertory prayer is quite simplified. There are no references to any of the saints as in the Roman Offertory; there remains only the general reference to the Passion,<sup>147</sup> as opposed to the reference to the Passion, Ascension, and Resurrection in the Roman. Nevertheless, there remains the same language of offering an oblation and that it be made acceptable. Noteworthy here in the Dominican offertory is the request that the offering be used to bring about the salvation of the one offering it and the whole of the faithful simply; in the Roman, the request is that the offering redound to the honor also of

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<sup>145</sup> Suscipe, sancta Trinitas, Ordo Missæ, *Saint Dominic Missal: Latin—English*, Urban P. Intondi, ed. (Saint Dominic Missal: New York, 1959), 622.

<sup>146</sup> Suscipe, sancta Trinitas, Ordo Missæ, *Missale Romanum: Ex Decreto SS. Concilii Tridentini Restitutum Summorum Pontificum Cura Recognitum*, vol. 1 (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962), 222.

<sup>147</sup> The direct reference to the Passion, it is reasonable to assume, in the mind of Aquinas, links the saving act of the Cross to the saving power of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

the saints and that it bring about the salvation of those on earth. Either way, the language is clearly of a sacrificial nature in the mode of an oblation. The celebrant, on behalf of the people and the whole Church (Triumphant, Militant, and Suffering), offers the gifts of bread and wine at his hands that they may be set aside and made holy so that they be accepted by God to become the Body and Blood of the Lord. “The offertory thus accomplished forms as it were a first sanctification of the bread and wine which [the offertory] withdraws from ordinary use.”<sup>148</sup> It does not consecrate the species in the same manner that the “*Hoc est enim...*” does. What the Offertory clearly does, though, is set aside the offering for sacred use only. The action of the Priest here is similar to the instruction given to the priests of the Old Covenant for animal offerings. The priest was instructed to lay his hands first on the creature to set it apart from the rest of the herd or flock and only then was it worthy of being offered to the Lord. There must be nothing profane used in this Holy Sacrifice, either. The Offertory is the first step in the process to set aside the sacrificial offering so that it may be found worthy and acceptable to God.

Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, and Luke 22:19 all relate the detail that before Christ broke the Passover bread, He either gave thanks or blessed it. One interpretation could be that this blessing, for us, is the corresponding Offertory prayer we use at Mass. The Offertory truly is a blessing; it sets the gifts aside, as mentioned above,<sup>149</sup> for sacred use. We should not interpret the use of the blessing in the Gospel narratives as referring to the consecration of the species into His own Body and Blood, for the Evangelists give His words “This is my body.”<sup>150</sup> There we have the words of consecration as are used at Mass.<sup>151</sup> From both a natural sacrificial perspective, but

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<sup>148</sup> François Amiot, *History of the Mass*, Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1958), 67.

<sup>149</sup> See p. 55-56.

<sup>150</sup> As well as Saint Paul in 1Cor 11:23-24.

<sup>151</sup> Noteworthy here is that the words of institution are also used at nearly all of the Divine Liturgies of the East, showing marvelous liturgical harmony among the East and West, cf. Amiot, *History of the Mass*, 90-92.

also from the language of the Gospels and Christ's command to the Apostles to do as He did, the Offertory prayer speaks in marked continuity with the actions of Christ before He entered into His Passion.

The part of Mass that most intimately resembles the action of Christ during the Last Supper, of course, is the Consecration itself. The Consecration is the central part of our main three parts; it is the hinge point between the preparation in the Offertory and the sacramental participation in the Communion. It is here, and only here, during the whole of the Mass of the Faithful, that the celebrant speaks in the first person, speaking the very words which our Lord spoke in the presence of His disciples. It is here at the consecration that we could consider the most intimate connection with the Last Supper, for all three sacrifices (Passion, Mass, Last Supper) are either present or directly recalled by the words spoken:

*Qui pridie quam pateretur.* These words were added by Pope Alexander I., the sixth Successor of St. Peter. This he did, in order to recall the Passion, because the Sacrifice of the Mass is one and the same with the Sacrifice of the Cross; for the same Lord, when He first immolated Himself in the Cenacle, on the Eve of His Sacrifice, was to be immolated the next day on Calvary. *Accepit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas.* At these words the Priest does the very same, he takes the Bread into his hands, *et elevatis oculis in coelum*, he too raises his eyes to heaven, imitating what he is saying that Our Lord did. It is not mentioned in the Gospel that Jesus raised His eyes to heaven, on this occasion, but tradition tells us so, – a tradition so certain that Holy Church makes a point of giving it here her full acceptance.<sup>152</sup>

Christ's action is directly imitated and recalled through the words and actions of the Mass.

Significant to note here, is that Dom Guéranger places the addition of the *Qui pridie* very early on in the growth of the Roman Liturgy. It would seem that the Church in the West had the desire

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<sup>152</sup> Prosper Guéranger, *On the Holy Mass*, trans. Laurence Shepherd (Farnborough, UK: Saint Michael's Abbey Press, 2006), 83-84.

very early on in the development of her worship to call the faithful to mind of the connections between the Passion, the Mass, and the Last Supper. The priest, assumes the mantle of the Headship of Christ, himself in Christ's place, moving as He moved, speaking as He spoke. Not only is the Passion of Christ made present at this moment, but the anticipation of the moment is recalled through the imitation of Christ's deeds and through the obedience of the Church to do as He did as a memorial for Him.

“The character of the Mass, as a commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross, manifests itself externally in the twofold Consecration of the bread and wine. This ceremony illustrates and symbolizes the physical separation of the Blood from the Body which took place on the Cross.”<sup>153</sup> The Aaronic sacrifices were an apt type of the death Christ would die. The priests were clearly directed to pour out the blood of the animal victims whenever a bloody sacrifice was offered to God. God Himself forbade the Children of Israel to consume meat with the blood in it since the natural life of the thing is in the blood. Where a body with natural life appears without its blood, so also it appears without its life.<sup>154</sup> In the Western tradition, it is in the Consecration that brings about the Real Presence of Christ; the Consecration provides the greatest link to the self-emptying of Christ out of love for man: “With the twofold consecration the great mystery is effected. Christ is present on the altar as really as at the Last Supper and on Calvary, with the same dispositions of offering and love, under appearances and with the use of formulas which vividly recall his sacrifices with the shedding of his blood.”<sup>155</sup> Amiot notes here that the double consecration also is reminiscent of the example of Christ at the Last Supper, for He Himself performed the first double consecration. As we have discussed above,<sup>156</sup> there were

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<sup>153</sup> Pohle, *Sacraments*, 334.

<sup>154</sup> Lev 17:10-11.

<sup>155</sup> Amiot, *History of the Mass*, 91-92.

<sup>156</sup> See p. 22ff.

good reasons this occurred due to the typical flow of the Passover observances of the Jews at the time, but one would not be surprised if our Lord also had in mind the symbolic value of the separation of body and blood that His own person would undergo the very next day.

Though the apex of the Mass is the Consecration, perhaps the part of Mass that is the point of greatest intimacy with God for both priest and layman is the Communion. For it is here at the Communion that we follow the command of our Lord in deed, by taking and eating as He instructed. Pope Pius XII said that, “by feasting upon the bread of angels we can by a ‘sacramental’ communion...also become partakers of the sacrifice, [the Church] repeats the invitation to all her children individually, ‘Take and eat ... Do this in memory of Me’<sup>157</sup> so that ‘we may continually experience within us the fruit of our redemption’<sup>158</sup> in a more efficacious manner.”<sup>159</sup> Like the Apostles on the night of the Last Supper, we have that same opportunity to be as close as we are able to our Lord in this life.

Christ anticipated Calvary by a night to give His disciples a new Covenant, a new sacrament, and a more perfect way to adore Him. When one approaches the altar and receives the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, one is following in the footsteps of the Twelve. The disciples, by the accounts of the Gospels, had very little idea the great gift that Christ gave them the night before He died. The Church, over the course of history has reflected considerably about what Communion with our Lord means. Pius XII, here, provides a clue as to the gravity of such an event as Communion: it is at once a response to an invitation, following divine instruction, our

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<sup>157</sup> 1Cor 11:24.

<sup>158</sup> Collect for the Feast of Corpus Christi.

<sup>159</sup> Pope Pius XII, Encyclical On the Sacred Liturgy *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947), §118.



personal partaking in the Sacrifice of Christ, and the fuller reception of the fruit of our redemption.

Two millennia of reflection have allowed the Church to explore deeply the meaning of Communion and how best to receive more fully the fruit of redemption offered therein. One manner, universally acclaimed,<sup>160</sup> of more fully receiving the grace of the Sacrifice is proper preparation of oneself by means of fasting before approaching the communion rail. Christ Himself admonished the disciples, saying “When you fast...” and not “If you fast...”<sup>161</sup> Fasting was often used throughout the history of Israel to express outwardly one’s sorrow for sins.<sup>162</sup> Moses fasted for 40 days and nights whilst witnessing the Lord write the Decalogue with His own hand.<sup>163</sup> Regarding the Passover feast, the Old Testament does not prescribe a particular fast for the week. However, as described by Dr. Pitre, it was a practice at the time of Christ that “the consumption of the Passover lamb was to be preceded by several hours of fasting, from the time of the evening sacrifice (about 3 p.m.). This should ring a bell for Christians who fast for a period of time before receiving the Eucharist, a practice going back to the ancient Church.”<sup>164</sup> The ritual disciplines used by the Church are not accidental; they are of utmost importance.<sup>165</sup> Regarding our own practice concerning our fasting prior to consuming the new Paschal Lamb, the further back in time we look, we find that fasting periods grow longer. The discipline of the

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<sup>160</sup> From Apostolic times to the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the whole of the Church’s teaching office and spiritual writers are adamant on the necessity of fasting in the life of the Christian. Self-denial and self-discipline redound to spiritual fruits.

<sup>161</sup> Matthew 6:16-17.

<sup>162</sup> Judg 20; 1Sam 7, 14; 2Sam 12; 1Kgs 21; to name but a few.

<sup>163</sup> Ex 34:28; Deut 6:6.

<sup>164</sup> Pitre, *Eucharist*, 150-151.

<sup>165</sup> *Mediator Dei*, §31-33.

Church in the West is now an hour before reception,<sup>166</sup> as it is also for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, currently.<sup>167</sup> Some time ago, the discipline was three hours before reception, go back one hundred years<sup>168</sup> and we see the discipline of fasting beginning with the midnight before. Arguments can be made from many sides as to the prudence of a longer fast time before the reception of Holy Communion and the applicability of older customs on younger generations, the point here is that regardless of the generation or the era in question, fasting is held up as an important means to prepare oneself for receiving the spiritual fruit available through Communion with Our Lord; and this practice extends back to the Jewish Passover celebrations of the Second Temple Period.

Not only is Communion similar to the first Passover, there is another event from the Old Testament wherein we find connections, namely the offering of bread and wine by Melchizedek. In Genesis 14, Melchizedek offers bread and wine in thanksgiving to the Lord in the presence of Abram for the great victory the Lord gave him. Likewise, we could say that one of the intentions of our Lord in offering the Last Supper was also in thanksgiving to His Heavenly Father for the great act of redemption which was about to unfold.<sup>169</sup> Since we, at Communion, partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord under the species of bread and wine, there is a profound connection and symbolism between it and Melchizedek's offering. So great a connection there is between

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<sup>166</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, c. 919 §1, in *Code of Canon Law Annotated: Second Edition Revised and Updated of the 6<sup>th</sup> Spanish Language Edition*, eds. Ernest Caparros, Michel Thériault, Jean Thorn (Midwest Theological Forum: Woodridge, IL, 2004), 711.

<sup>167</sup> *The Particular Law of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church: According to the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, Promulgated by the Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Title X, Chapter 3, Canon 93, §1, (7 April 2015), trans. Paul Luniw, ed. Michael Kwiatkowski, accessed 3 May 2018, <http://nweparchy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/The-Particular-Law-of-the-Ukrainian-Greek-Catholic-Church.pdf>.

<sup>168</sup> *Code of Canon Law/1917*, c. 858 §1, in *The Pio Benedictine Code of Canon Law: In English Translation with Extensive Scholarly Apparatus*, ed. Edward Peters (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2001), 306.

<sup>169</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 140-141.

Melchizedek and our own offering of bread and wine that Matthew Levering says Melchizedek's offering is the best symbol for the unitive action of Christ's priesthood.<sup>170</sup> Saint Thomas said similarly when he wrote, "[I]f we consider the participation of [Christ's] sacrifice and the effect thereof, wherein the excellence of Christ's priesthood over the priesthood of the Law principally consists, then the former was more distinctly foreshadowed by the priesthood of Melchisedech, who offered bread and wine..."<sup>171</sup> The use of the word 'participation' is interesting here; Aquinas undoubtedly is speaking of the participation of the faithful throughout the whole of Mass, but it should be reasonable to conclude as well that Aquinas had the partaking of Christ's sacrifice in communion as well, since he concludes the reply to Objection 2 with "Wherefore also in the New Law the true sacrifice of Christ is presented to the faithful under the form of bread and wine." Aquinas, we could argue, regarded participation more fully in both dimensions, being present for the whole of the Mass and offering the prayer of the Church as well as the partaking of the Sacrament of the Altar in Holy Communion.

Finally, Communion harkens back to the Last Supper by way of the fact that both are rituals involve the consumption of the offering by the participants. At the original Passover, God instructed the Israelites to choose a lamb without blemish for each household to slaughter and consume; nothing was to remain of it by morning.<sup>172</sup> Elsewhere, those Israelites who were held ritually clean were expected to partake in the Passover celebrations, this, apparently, was not an optional event; those who could were instructed to consume the flesh of the lamb.<sup>173</sup> While spiritual communion is part of Catholic tradition, the Church has been keen on exhorting the faithful to take advantage of the sacraments as they are able. For those who are in a state of

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<sup>170</sup> Levering, *Priesthood*, 117.

<sup>171</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 22, a. 6, ad 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 251-252.

<sup>172</sup> Ex 12:8-10.

<sup>173</sup> Num 9:10-14.

grace, overall, they ought to partake in the Most Holy Sacrament; the Fathers of the Council of Trent and Saint Pius X all greatly desired that the faithful would partake in the Sacrament frequently.<sup>174</sup> Since Christ at the Last Supper commanded His disciples to take and eat, it follows that we should do the same when we come before the renewed banquet of the Lord.

### **The Mass and Calvary**

In many ways, the flow of the Mass evokes a sense of the Last Supper; we gather, speak with, and learn from the Lord, then we turn with him to offering His own most holy Body and Blood to God the Father, we take and eat as we were told, then we follow him out of the upper room into the Gethsemane of the World. All this is well and good, but it would be without any power whatsoever were the Mass not truly the paramount participation in the Sacrifice at Calvary. Similarly, the natural oblation of the Mass would be nearly meaningless were Christ Himself not the one who primarily offered Mass. Nevertheless, Holy Mass contains within itself signs that are naturally intelligible to man as a sacrifice. Msgr. Ott is clear on this point and delineates four dimensions present in a sacrifice: 1) The visible gift offered, 2) The priest who ministers to God as a representative of the people, 3) That there exists a purpose in offering the thing,<sup>175</sup> 4) both visible and invisible sacrificial actions.<sup>176</sup> In the case of the Mass itself, each of these four points can be seen and understood naturally, having the same foundation of piety that all other natural offerings contained: 1) At the start of the Mass of the Elect, bread and wine are prepared and set aside through the offertory prayers,<sup>177</sup> 2) The priest present speaks very consistently, save one part, in the first person plural indicating that he is also one of those for

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<sup>174</sup> DH 1747, 3375-3383

<sup>175</sup> In the case of Holy Mass, these would be four: Adoration, Thanksgiving, Propitiation, and Impetration.

<sup>176</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 183-184.

<sup>177</sup> Namely, the *Súscipe, sancte Pater*, the *Offérimus tibi, Domine*, and the *Súscipe, Sancta Trinitas*.

whom he offers the oblation, though set aside in a special way so as to be worthy of offering the aforementioned gifts to God, 3) The purpose of the oblation is shown in a somewhat condensed form in the *Oráte, fratres* dialogue, where the people implore that the Lord may accept the sacrifice a) for His glory b) for the good of those present and c) for the good of the whole Church, 4) The whole of the Mass of the Elect contains visible signs, such as the bows and genuflections, the signs of the cross over the oblation, the elevations of the species, the hushed silence during the holiest part of the Rite (in the West), the veiling of the altar via the Iconostasis during the holiest part of the Rite (in the East), the sacral language used in the Rite, etc., the invisible disposition made by these signs is one of humility and full abandon to the *clementíssime Pater*<sup>178</sup> for forgiveness and grace.

The Council of Trent makes clear that the Mass was prefigured by the natural and Mosaic sacrifices and oblations in practice before Christ's own supreme Sacrifice. The Mass is the "clean oblation" without defilement foretold through Malachi which "was prefigured by various types of sacrifices under the regime of nature and of the law."<sup>179</sup> For it includes all the good that was signified by those former sacrifices; it is their fulfillment and perfection."<sup>180</sup> We can see parallels in many ways from the various natural sacrifices before Christ perfected sacrifice. In ancient Rome, certain verbs concerning sacrifice were only used in conjunction with the sacrificing priest, never his assistants; likewise, our own tradition after Christ identifies that it is the priest who offers and immolates, all others (deacons, acolytes, other ministers, and the laity) assist him in his priestly act of sacrificing and offering the oblations to God the Father.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> The *incipit* of the Roman Canon is, fittingly, *Te igitur, clementíssime Pater*.

<sup>179</sup> Gen 4:4; 8:20; 12:8; 22:1-19; Ex: passim.

<sup>180</sup> Council of Trent, Session 22, Chapter 1; DH 1742.

<sup>181</sup> Swaby, *Last Supper*, 50.

In the manner of the Mosaic sacrifices, we see significant parallels with the grain and cereal offerings as well as the obvious offering of bread and wine by Melchizedek. When we consider Melchizedek's offering, the typology is readily discernible. Melchizedek is both king and priest, so too is our Lord; they both offer to God bread and wine in thanksgiving.<sup>182</sup> Not only does Christ offer bread and wine at the Last Supper before His Passion and death, he also offers bread and wine through his priest ministers as a representation of His same Passion and death. More so, Justin Martyr saw typology in the thanksgiving offerings of those who were cured of leprosy under the Law of Moses: “‘And the offering of fine flour, sirs,’ I said, ‘which was prescribed to be presented on behalf of those purified from leprosy, was a type of the bread of the Eucharist...’”<sup>183</sup> Leprosy was a disease that rendered one totally unable to participate in the cult of the Lord at the Temple. Naturally, one who recovered or was healed in some other way should want to offer thanksgiving to the Lord for deigning that he should be healed.

As mentioned above,<sup>184</sup> the cereal offerings were offered by the priest at the behest of a member of the community or were offered as part of certain festive times and were intended as thanksgiving offerings for God's faithful care over His people as well as a way to strengthen the bond between the Lord and Israel as a whole. In a similar manner, the offerings of bread and wine at mass are offered to God in thanksgiving for His care over the Church. The Preface Dialogue and the prefaces themselves are stunning examples of thanksgiving and praise to God for His care and providence. Beginning with the Dialogue, the celebrant exhorts the faithful present to lift up their hearts, and the faithful reply and affirm that they do just that. He then

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<sup>182</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 729.

<sup>183</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew*, in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 215.

<sup>184</sup> See p. 20.

continues and expresses his desire to give thanks to God, the faithful reply that it is right to do so. Regarding the prefaces, all of the Roman prefaces, save two,<sup>185</sup> begin in exactly the same manner: “*Vere dignum et justum est, æquum et salutäre, nos tibi semper et ubique grätias ägere: Dömine, sancte Pater, omnöpogens ætérne Deus...*”<sup>186</sup> The celebrant speaks emphatically that it is right for our salvation that we should always give thanks and praise to God; each preface continues in its own way why God the Father should be praised and given thanks. The Preface of the Most Holy Trinity gives thanks and praise to God simply for the fact that He is a Trinity and that all the choirs of angels praise and adore Him; the whole preface is an affirmation and a simpler recapitulation of the Athanasian Creed.

The typology of the natural sacrifices with the sacrificial character of the Mass has an elevated and complete intelligibility only when we understand it in conjunction with the reality of Christ’s offering of Himself on the Cross of Calvary. The tradition of the Church universally recognizes that doctrinal statements on the Mass must presuppose the sacrificial nature of Calvary.<sup>187</sup> Msgr. Ronald Knox aptly summarizes the final cause of the Incarnation thus:

But our Lord did not come to earth simply in order to *exist* as Man. There was an end for his existence as Man, and that end (was) to suffer and be sacrificed. The Atonement is the primary purpose of the Incarnation; the road that begins at Bethlehem leads to Calvary. So in his chief Sacrament our Lord becomes present, not simply for the sake of being present, but in order that being present he may be offered up.<sup>188</sup>

The Second Person of the Trinity deigned it fitting to assume a human nature, grow to manhood, and offer Himself up so that men be saved from their sins; concurrently, this same God-Man

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<sup>185</sup> The only two which differ are the Preface of the Apostles, which implores the Lord not to abandon His flock and the Preface for Easter gives praise to God *simpliciter*.

<sup>186</sup> Præfationes sine cantu, *Missale Romanum* (1962), 284-298.

<sup>187</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 184.

<sup>188</sup> Ronald Knox, *Charing Cross*, 86-87.

appears under a sacramental sign, not simply to be made present, but that He might be offered up to save men from their sins. The end is the same. Whether under the form of a man or under the form of a sacrament, His goal is the same, as well as his mode of saving: sacrifice. “The institution of the Eucharist demonstrates how Jesus’ death, for all its violence and absurdity, became in him a supreme act of love and mankind’s definitive deliverance from evil.”<sup>189</sup> The Eucharist, especially in the context of Holy Mass, is the prime sacrament by which we are incorporated into Him.<sup>190</sup> Those who are present and receive Him strengthen their incorporation, their participation, in His Mystical Body.<sup>191</sup> The fruits of the Cross, which are always present in the Church, are renewed and given again to those present and to those for whom each Mass is offered. The benefits of the singular Sacrifice of the Cross are ever newly applied to those who ask to receive them.<sup>192</sup>

It is clear now that, the Church has universally affirmed that the Mass contains within it the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The question that follows is a matter of how this might be. Saint Thomas ventures to give two answers: that of the Image and that of the Effect. Firstly, Aquinas quotes Saint Augustine,

*The images of things are called by the names of the things whereof they are the images; as when we look upon a picture or a fresco, we say, ‘This is Cicero and that is Sallust.’* But, as was said above (Q. 79, A. 1), the celebration of this sacrament is an image representing Christ’s Passion, which is His true sacrifice. Accordingly the celebration of this sacrament is called Christ’s sacrifice.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), §10

<sup>190</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 75, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 200-201.

<sup>191</sup> Matthew Levering, “Aquinas on the Liturgy of the Eucharist,” in Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum, *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 191.

<sup>192</sup> Aidan Nichols, *The Holy Eucharist: From the New Testament to Pope John Paul II* (Dublin: Veritas, 1991), 108.

<sup>193</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 333.



The influence of this analogy would seem to be rooted in the declarations of the Second Council of Nicaea, the great anti-iconoclasm council. It was at Nicaea II that the Church ratified the usefulness of the veneration of icons of saints and holy people. Aquinas and Augustine above imply that the image viewed is not the thing contemplated by the viewer; it is more proper to say that when a viewer looks upon a bust or fresco of Cicero, he is properly contemplating Cicero. Similarly, concerning the Mass, though it has its own integrity as a thing performed at a particular time and place in history, the thing being contemplated is the Unique Sacrifice of Christ at Calvary. The Mass is a thing to be looked along and not merely at. If we only look at it, we mistake the image for the original, just as we would mistake Act 3 of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for the real stabbing that took place on the steps of the senate in 44 BC. The Eucharist as an image of Calvary in no way should make us think, however, that the former is merely a reenactment or recurrence of the latter.<sup>194</sup>

This brings us to the second answer of Saint Thomas, “[The Mass] is called a sacrifice, in respect of the effect of His Passion: because, to wit, by this sacrament, we are made partakers of the fruit of our Lord’s Passion. Hence in one of the Sunday Secrets (Ninth Sunday after Pentecost) we say: *Whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is enacted.*”<sup>195</sup> We might call Calvary the mover of the Mass. The oblation offered by Christ and the Church is also that same sacrifice on Calvary since the effect is the same effect: the forgiveness of sins. The difference between them is that Christ’s death on the Cross is the offering that the Father first found acceptable and the Mass is the representation of that same Sacrifice which the Father eternally finds acceptable.<sup>196</sup> The Mass is the means by which men in

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<sup>194</sup> Levering, *Aquinas on Doctrine*, 191.

<sup>195</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 334.

<sup>196</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 1, ad 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 334.

each age of the Church participate in Calvary. Christ's Passion happened only once in time, but the Mass happens each day. Whenever we might we can go back to Calvary, in an imaginative way of speaking, and make ourselves the thief on our Lord's right, begging to be remembered when He enters His Kingdom. Pope Pius XII speaks about the necessity for each man to come into "individual contact" with the Cross of Christ and this is accomplished by his participation in the Holy Mass. Christ, he says, in a beautiful analogy, built a font on Calvary filled with His own Blood but it is incumbent upon each man to come to it and wash. Without this washing, the saving power of Christ is not applied.<sup>197</sup>

The first answer of Saint Thomas regarding how the Mass may be called a sacrifice is an analogy. The answer is not comprehensive but allows the reader to understand how two different things are connected to each other. There is, then, an implication that the Mass and Calvary are distinct. The obvious response being that the one occurs every day and the other occurred once in history. This is true, but we find that it misses the point when we think of the strength of the language used in the tradition to identify Calvary with the Mass: "For, the victim is one and the same: the same one now offers himself by the ministry of the priests who then offered himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different."<sup>198</sup> For Trent, the singular Victim is Christ; in both offerings, Christ gives of Himself and empties Himself out of love to His heavenly Father, the only difference is the manner and mode of the offering differs: the one a bloody offering, the other an unbloody and sacramental offering. The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* seems to offer its own interpretation of Trent, when it references the Council and the identity of Calvary and the Mass; the Catechism uses the word *sacrificium* instead of *hostiam*.<sup>199</sup> It is outside the

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<sup>197</sup> *Mediator Dei*, §77.

<sup>198</sup> Council of Trent, Session 22, Chapter 2; DH 1743.

<sup>199</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 1367.

scope of this project to explore whether this is only a linguistic difference, a different interpretation, a theological development, or a theological innovation but we highlight it here because there is a difference. For our purposes here, we highlight that both Trent and the new catechism affirm that there is a difference in the manner of the sacrifice alone.

Though the manner of the offering is distinct, each Mass is a participation in the once-for-all Sacrifice on the Cross. In the Roman Canon, immediately after the consecration, the celebrant prays the *Unde et memores* prayer:

*Unde et memores, Dómine, nos servi tui, sed et plebs tua sancta, eiúsdem Christi Fílii tui, Dómini nostri, tam beátæ passiónis, nec non et ab ínferis resurrectiónis, sed et in cælos gloriósa ascensiónis: offérimus præcláræ maiestáti tuæ de tuis donis ac datis hóstiam puram, hóstiam sanctam, hóstiam immaculátam, Panem sanctum vitæ ætérnæ, et Cálícem salútis perpétuæ.*<sup>200</sup>

The theme in this whole prayer is calling to mind the Passion and Death of the One who now lays on the altar. Though not part of the rubric for the Roman Liturgy, some Monastic liturgies, such as the Dominican and Carmelite Missals, instruct the celebrant to extend his arms out to his sides in the form of a cross. There's a fittingness that the Cross should, in a manner of speaking, be incarnated in the priest at this point in the Mass. This is the first prayer said after both species are consecrated; the full sacramental presence of Christ is brought forth and the first thing the Mass does is remind us of how this sacramental presence came about: through the Cross. Not only do some traditions direct the celebrant to make his own body a cross, he is also directed to make five signs of the cross over the sacred species to symbolize the five wounds in the Body of the Lord.<sup>201</sup> In the Eastern Liturgies, there is a prayer called the *ἀνάμνησις* that corresponds to

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<sup>200</sup> Unde et memores, Canon Missæ, Ordo Missæ, *Missale Romanum* (1962), 308.

<sup>201</sup> *Summa Theologiæ*, III, q. 83, a. 5, ad 3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, 350-351.

the *Unde et memores*. It is called the *anamnesis* in that tradition because it is done in obedience to Christ's specific command that we offer what He offered.<sup>202</sup> Pope Benedict XVI states that the Mass as a whole is part of this remembering or making a remembrance of Christ's Offering, but it is the consecration, in obedience to His words to do it as a memorial for Him, where the memory is most complete. He warns, however, that, "The remembrance of his perfect gift consists not in the mere repetition of the Last Supper, but in the Eucharist itself, that is, in the radical newness of Christian worship."<sup>203</sup> This remembrance or memorializing, for the pope, is not mere reenactment of the actions of Christ at the Last Supper; it is making present the Sacrifice in the new worship of God the Father as was bidden us by the Son. There is power in the words of consecration, but they are not magical spell-words in a hocus pocus sort of manner, as some would charge.<sup>204</sup> Through each word, the Church participates in the eternal prayer and offering of Christ to His Heavenly Father.<sup>205</sup> It is not by the power of the Church alone, as human members, but only through the unity and participation in our Lord's Mystical Body that these words make present the pure and spotless Victim who hung on the Cross.

And a pure and spotless Victim is the Eucharist, as the Prophet Malachi foretold 500 years before the birth of Christ.<sup>206</sup> From the Apostolic Fathers to the 20<sup>th</sup> century manualists, the tradition is clear that the Divine Liturgy is the sacrifice that the Lord promised through his prophet, Malachi. The *Didache* mentions the importance of meeting on the Lord's Day to offer sacrifice and, quoting Malachi 1, "this is the sacrifice concerning which the Lord said, 'In every

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<sup>202</sup> Amiot, *History of the Mass*, 95.

<sup>203</sup> *Sacramentum Caritatis*, §11.

<sup>204</sup> As a matter of fact, the term 'hocus pocus' was originally a slander against Catholics deriving from the Latin words of consecration: *Hoc est enim corpus meum*.

<sup>205</sup> Ratzinger, *Holy Week*, 128.

<sup>206</sup> Hahn, *Bible Dictionary*, 567.

place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is marvelous among the nations.”<sup>207</sup> Not only does this reference in Malachi indicate the purity and acceptability of the sacrifice before the Lord, it also speaks of the universality of the sacrifice. Saint Justin Martyr makes a clear reference that it is the Greek gentiles who fulfill the prophecy when they celebrate the sacrifice on the Lord’s Day over and against the Jews: “[The Lord] then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us, who in every place offer sacrifices to Him, i.e., the bread of the Eucharist, and also the cup of the Eucharist, affirming both that we glorify His name, and that you profane [it].”<sup>208</sup> By Justin’s time, word of the Gospel had spread quite far across the Greek world, whereas the Jews had lost the Temple and could no longer offer the Mosaic sacrifices on the Mount. The sacrificial offerings of the Jews in the diaspora were accounted as unlawful and unacceptable by God, but the offerings of the gentiles under the headship of the Apostles, and later their bishops, were the acceptable and pure sacrifices offered according to the prophecy of Malachi.<sup>209</sup>

“If, therefore, with a pure heart, a lively faith, and affected with an inward sorrow for our transgressions, we immolate and offer this most holy victim, we shall, without doubt, obtain mercy from the Lord, and grace in time of need; for so delighted is the Lord with the odor of this victim that, bestowing on us the gift of grace and repentance, He pardons our sins.”<sup>210</sup> Our most loving Father is so delighted by His beloved Son’s Offering that He will not refrain from forgiving even the smallest sin if we come to Him with a humble and contrite heart.

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<sup>207</sup> *The Didache*, XIV, 3, in *The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Epistles and the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, The Fragments of Papias, The Epistle of Diognetus*, trans. James Kleist, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, No. 6. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1948), 23-24.

<sup>208</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, 41.

<sup>209</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 403.

<sup>210</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. John McHugh and Charles Callan (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1982), 275-276.

## Conclusion

Anticipating His Sacrifice at the Last Supper, fulfilling the promises of the Law and the Prophets at the Consummation of His life at Calvary, and extending that Offering of Himself throughout all space and time through the sacrifices of His priests, our Lord's whole purpose was to show forth the mercy and glory of His heavenly Father and bring all of creation to Him again. Of the Last Supper: "His life will be taken from him on the Cross, but here he is already laying it down. He transforms his violent death into a free act of self-giving for others and to others."<sup>211</sup> Benedict XVI here intimates the idea, but Fulton Sheen expounds it more fully:

The story of every human life begins with birth and ends with death. In the person of Christ, however, *it was His death that was first and His life that was last*. The Scripture describes Him as "the Lamb slain as it were, from the beginning of the world." He was slain in intention by the first sin and rebellion against God. It was not so much the His birth cast a shadow on His life and thus led to His death; it was rather that the Cross was first and cast its shadow back to His birth. His has been the only life in the world that was ever lived backward.<sup>212</sup>

Our Lord's life was lived singularly for the Cross. Because of the intimate connection, as we have seen, between these three events (Cross, Calvary, Mass), Christ's life and action ought to inform foundationally the lives of each of His members in the Church. It is only in Him that we can pray as at the *Secret* for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, "Graciously look upon the sacrifices, we pray, O Lord, which we lay upon thy sacred altar, that, in bestowing to us forgiveness, they may give Thy name honor."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ratzinger, *Holy Week*, 131.

<sup>212</sup> Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), 4-5. (Emphasis in the Original)

<sup>213</sup> "Hóstias, quæsumus, Dómine, propítius inténde, quas sacris altáribus exhibémus: ut, nobis indulgéntiam largiéndo, tuo nómini dent honórem." *Secreta, Dominica Duodecima post Pentecosten, Missale Romanum* (1962), 393.

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