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# With Many Such Parables He Spoke: The Liturgy as a Continuation of Christ's Ministry in the Church

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THE SAINT PAUL SEMINARY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
UNIVERSITY OF SAINT THOMAS

With Many Such Parables He Spoke: The Sacraments as a Continuation of Christ's Ministry in  
the Church

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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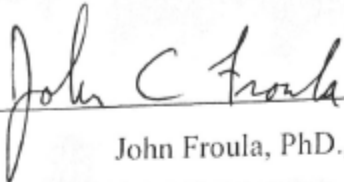
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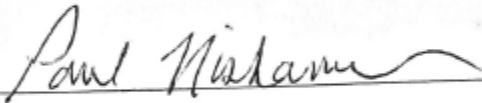
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## Introduction: The Centrality of the Incarnation

### The Incarnation as Foundation and Source of the Sacraments

#### *Motives of the Incarnation*

“The Word was made flesh, and came to dwell among us”<sup>1</sup> (Jn 1:14 Knox). These words transformed the course of world culture, and have been the source of much discussion and debate throughout the centuries. Christ became man in obedience to the Father’s will for man’s salvation (1 Tim. 2:4), an obedience which led to the Cross (Phil. 2:8). For Catholics, the Cross stands at the center of their religion, and about it the other doctrines turn and find their foundation and center. This is especially true of the Incarnation, which was the first step for the Trinity’s plan of redemption.<sup>2</sup>

This Incarnation-Redemption theology begins from the tragic fact that man had sinned. As St. Paul writes in Romans, “it was through one man that sin entered the world,” namely, through the sin of Adam (Rom. 5:12). Man, created in the image and likeness of God, had turned from God to follow the impulse of pride, which manifested itself through an inordinate desire for material goods, namely, the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This inordinate desire becomes a constant plague on human nature, through a preference for material things such as food, pleasure, even idols. After the Fall, as St. Athanasius writes, “men’s minds...finally [fell] to things of sense.”<sup>3</sup> By nature, as Aquinas writes, man comes to know things through corporeal things and

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<sup>1</sup> . *The Holy Bible: Knox Version* (London: Baronius Press, 2012). All biblical citations are taken from the Knox version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> I leave aside for now the debate about whether Christ would have become Incarnate had man not sinned. For the purposes of this thesis, what matters is that man *did* sin, and Christ *did* become Incarnate.

<sup>3</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 16.1, at New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2802.htm>

sense knowledge.<sup>4</sup> The particular malice of sin is that it “[subjects man] by his affections to corporeal things.”<sup>5</sup> To remedy this, then, Christ makes use of the sensible and corporeal to redeem man.

The Incarnation, as said above, served as a precursor to the Cross for, as St. Gregory of Nazianzen writes in his letter to Cledonius, “that which [God] has not assumed He has not healed.”<sup>6</sup> This might be called the priestly motive of the Incarnation. Yet, Christ also became man in order to found, by His Cross, the New Covenant and to preach and teach people concerning the coming of God’s kingdom. These latter two might be called the kingly and prophetic motives for the Incarnation, respectively. Because man had misused his sense powers and become engrossed in material things, “the Word disguised Himself by appearing in a body that He might, as man...center [man’s] senses on Himself and...persuade [man] by the works He did that He is not man only, but also God.”<sup>7</sup> Christ came to guide His people and issue them commands, to remind them of the essence of the Old Law, to reveal Himself as the Messiah and God-Man, and ultimately to save and redeem the people from their sins.

The point behind these various actions is that Christ wished to make Himself, and therefore God, visible to His people. Paul affirms this in calling Christ “the image of the invisible God,” (Col. 1:15). Jesus Himself affirms this too when He notes that “whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” (Jn. 14:9). Athanasius notes that “[Christ] did not immediately...accomplish His sacrifice...for by this means He would have made Himself invisible.”<sup>8</sup> Christ certainly could

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 1, respondeo, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province at New Advent at <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/4061.htm> (all subsequent quotes from the Summa are taken from New Advent).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory of Nazianzen, *Letter CL: To Cledonius the Priest against Apollinaris*, at New Advent at <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3103a.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 16.1.

<sup>8</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 16.4.

have accomplished the redemption of humanity within the first moment or first years of His Incarnation, or even without becoming Incarnate.<sup>9</sup> However, He willed to “[make] Himself visible enough by what He did, abiding in it, and doing such works, and showing such signs as made Him known no longer as man, but as God the Word.”<sup>10</sup> By doing such things, Christ acted to re-orient humanity’s fallen nature to the proper use of its senses. Man could now use his senses to discover invisible realities and spiritual truths, and so be liberated from his slavery to the senses. In this way, as the devil deceived man by sensible things, so now by sensible things man might be set free.

### *Providing for His People*

However, Christ did not will to remain on earth physically forever. At the Last Supper Christ told the Apostles that He must “go away to prepare [them] a home,” (Jn. 14:3). He further states that the Holy Spirit, “He who is to befriend [the disciples] will not come to [them]” unless He goes back to the Father (Jn. 16:7). At the same time, however, Jesus promised the Church that He would always remain with her (Matt. 28:20). How are these two seemingly contradictory ideas to be reconciled? The key lies in the sacraments. Aquinas notes that there is a three-fold necessity to the sacraments. The first point rests on the condition of man, who as stated above comes to know things through the senses, and so is provided by God with a “means of salvation in the shape of corporeal and sensible signs called sacraments.”<sup>11</sup> The second point is so that “the healing remedy...be given to a man so as to reach the part affected by the disease.”<sup>12</sup> One part affected by the disease of Original Sin was of course the senses, and so the sacraments were

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<sup>9</sup> *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 1, a. 2, respondeo.

<sup>10</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 16.4

<sup>11</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 1, respondeo.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

given as sensible things to heal man's senses. The final point is that "man is prone to direct his activity chiefly toward material things" and to be snared by things such as idol worship.<sup>13</sup> The sacraments thus serve to teach man to properly make use of material things.

The sacraments also serve to prolong Christ's ministry in the Church, which will be discussed in later chapters. More importantly, however, they serve to increase the faith of the members. As Pope Leo the Great wrote, after Christ ascended "what till then was visible [of Him] was changed into a sacramental presence...."<sup>14</sup> In this way the faithful are led to behold Christ with the eyes of faith rather than seeing Him visibly, though they will see Him visibly once again at the end of time. This faith is a completion and fulfillment of the faith with which the Jewish people awaited the coming of the Messiah. As Benedictine monk Anscar Vonier writes, faith in Christ could have existed before Christ became present in history, but the sacraments could not.<sup>15</sup> This is because it was only after Christ assumes a human nature and thereby consecrates material things to be conduits of divine grace that the sacramental economy is even possible.

The Incarnation was a precursor to the Cross. In a similar way, the Cross was a precursor for the establishment of the sacraments. As Aquinas writes, the sacraments are ordered principally to two ends: the taking away of the effects from past sins and the perfecting of the soul in the true faith.<sup>16</sup> Both of these effects were accomplished on the Cross, and so it is said that the sacraments derive their power from Christ's Passion.<sup>17</sup> Further, as Paul says, Christ dwells in His people by faith (Eph. 3:17), and by faith the merits of Christ's Passion are applied

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Leo the Great, *Sermo 74*, c. II, at New Advent at <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360374.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Anscar Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (US: Assumption Press, 2013), 35.

<sup>16</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 62, a. 5, respondeo.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

to us.<sup>18</sup> Hence by instituting the sacraments Christ gives to His people a living faith whereby He might dwell in them and they might receive the effects of His redemptive Passion.

To summarize, what was invisible was made visible in the Incarnation. After the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, what was visible became a sacramental presence in the Church. In this thesis, I will argue that although Christ is present in a unique and substantial way in the Eucharist, He is likewise present in an analogous way in all the sacraments. This presence is facilitated by what I will refer to as “liturgical parables,” or the sacramental acts and symbols. This presence both incites the people to faith and perfects this faith in them, aiding the people with the merits of the Passion to grow in grace and virtue until the end of time.

In the first chapter I will examine the sacraments and prophets of the Old Law, showing how the former pointed to Christ *in figura* while the latter reminded the people of the true purpose of the sacrificial system and relation with God through parables. Chapter two will examine Christ’s role as Priest, Prophet, and King, and how He fulfills and elevates the sacraments and parables of the Old Law. Chapter three will show how each aspect of the three-fold office of Christ continues in the Church and how it is exercised through the hierarchy and the sacraments. Chapter four will discuss how Christ is present through liturgical parables in the sacraments, and how the faithful encounter Christ in these various modes of presence. Finally, chapter five will examine some practical questions about participation and how best to facilitate the fruitful encounter of the faithful with Christ so that they might receive the fruits of His Passion.

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<sup>18</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, q. 62, a. 5, ad 2.



## Chapter One: The Sacraments of the Old Law

### The Rites and Teaching of the Old Law as Preparation for Christ

#### *Different Meanings of Sacrament*

At first glance, to say that there are sacraments in the Old Law might seem paradoxical. After all, did not Christ come to establish the sacraments as a fulfillment of the Old Law? Further, the Church herself teaches that the sacraments are visible signs which “confer the grace which they signify,”<sup>19</sup> and as said in the introduction, this grace comes from Christ’s Passion. How then can there be sacraments of the Old Law, when Christ’s Passion has not yet occurred? The answer lies precisely in the nature of a sacrament as a sign.

Anscar Vonier, quoting Aquinas, gives one definition of a sacrament as “certain signs protesting that faith through which Man is justified.”<sup>20</sup> Aquinas goes on to say that these signs differ in whether they signify something future, past, or present. Aquinas notes that primarily the sacraments of the Old Law point forward to Christ, anticipating His Cross and the Sacraments of the New Law.<sup>21</sup> Thus for the Israelites, these sacraments of the Old Law signify something future. For the Church, however, these sacraments signify something past, as the Old Law has been fulfilled in Christ through His Cross. The sacraments of the Old Law also signify something past, insofar as they recall the major events in the history of the people of Israel, such as circumcision recalling God’s promise to Abraham. At the same time, both the sacraments of the Old Law and those of the New Law signify something present. In the former case, they signify God’s continued faithfulness to His covenant and His continued mercy on the nation of Israel in

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<sup>19</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 1131.

<sup>20</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 4, respondeo, in Vonier, op. cit., 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 4, cf. Mileto of Sardis, *On the Passover*, at <https://www.kerux.com/doc/0401A1.asp>.

spite of their constant infidelity. In the case of the New Law sacraments, they signify Christ's enduring presence in His Church, and the constant outpouring of the merits of His Passion on the faithful.<sup>22</sup> Yet these New Law sacraments also signify something future as well, in that they point toward to heaven.<sup>23</sup>

### *Sacraments of the Old Law: Different Temporal Significations*

The sacraments of the Old Law are generally divided into three categories: those things which set Men apart as worshippers of God, things which pertain to the worship of God, and sacrifices and rites of purification.<sup>24</sup> Among those things which set Men apart as worshippers for God was circumcision. Augustine, in his reply to Faustus<sup>25</sup>, offers an example of the patristic understanding of the future-pointing nature of this sacrament:

For what does circumcision mean, but the eradication of the mortality which comes from our carnal generation? So the apostle says: "Putting off from Himself His flesh, He made a show of principalities and powers, triumphing over them in Himself." ... This is the mystery of circumcision, which by the law took place on the eighth day; and on the eighth day, the Lord's day, the day after the Sabbath, was fulfilled in its true meaning by the Lord. Hence it is said, "Putting off His flesh, He made a show of principalities and powers." For by means of this mortality the hostile powers of hell ruled over us. Christ is said to have made a show or example of these, because in Himself, our Head, He gave an example

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<sup>22</sup> See Lawrence Feingold, *The Eucharist: The Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 179-184. This section, with the tripartite division between *sacramentum tantum*, *res et sacramentum tantum*, and *res tantum*, plays in well with the discussion here on the different temporal significations. It seems to me that the different temporal significations are found at the levels of the outward rite, the *sacramentum tantum*, and the inner reality and sign, the *res et sacramentum*. For example, in Baptism, the outward sign, the pouring of the water, can point to the past in signifying Christ's Baptism and the various Old Testament prefigurements of Baptism. Yet, it also signifies something present, the remission of original sin (and actual sin in the case of adult baptism), which itself is the *res et sacramentum*. See the references in Feingold for more on this tripartite division.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, the prayer *O Sacrum Convivium*.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Kennedy, "Sacraments" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* at New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm>

<sup>25</sup> For a good discussion of the typological import of Augustine's *Contra Faustum*, especially regarding Circumcision, see Matthew Levering, "Scriptural and Sacramental Signs: Augustine's *Answer to Faustus*" *Letter and Spirit*, 7 (2011): 91-118, at 94 and 100-101.

which will be fully realized in the liberation of His whole body, the Church, from the power of the devil at the last resurrection. This is our faith.<sup>26</sup>

Here Augustine connects the Passion with the circumcision. In the Passion, Christ “puts off from Himself His flesh” in death, and thus triumphs over the principalities and powers, the forces of death and the devil. Circumcision, by “putting off the flesh” made the recipient a member of the chosen people of Israel, thus in a certain sense triumphing over the pagan peoples around them. In Baptism circumcision is brought to ultimate fulfillment. As the putting off of flesh made the Israelite a member of God’s people, and as Christ’s putting off of flesh triumphed over sin and death, so now Baptism both makes the believer a member of Christ’s Mystical Body and liberates him from sin and death (Col. 2:11-12).

For the Israelites, circumcision also signified something present and past. In the present, as said above, circumcision signified the members of the people of Israel as those who were set apart for God as His chosen people. So important was this reminder that often in the Old Testament God permitted terrible calamities, such as domination by foreign powers, to afflict His people when they neglected circumcision (e.g. 1 Macc. 1:15-16). This reminder, of course, had its origin in the events of Israel’s past. After Abraham had grown impatient with God in waiting for the birth of a son, and sinned with Hagar, God reveals Himself to him once again. God reiterates His promise of land and myriads of descendants, but also makes the covenant of circumcision with Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14). “If any male person” were to go uncircumcised, “there is no place for

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<sup>26</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum*, book XVI, no. 29, at New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140616.htm>.

him among his people...” (Gen. 17:14). Indeed, such a person would thus be excluded not just from Israel, but from God’s covenant as well. Yet when this sacrament is fulfilled in Baptism, the Scriptures warn against going back to what is imperfect, obliging the people to hold rather to the perfect fulfillment. Paul even goes so far as to say that those who are circumcised after the coming of Christ are bound to obey the Law, and are bound into slavery rather than living in the freedom of Christ (Gal. 5:1-6). Such was the importance of circumcision and its fulfillment.

Among the things which pertain to the worship of God, none is more important than the Passover. After circumcision, the rite of Passover is perhaps the defining mark of the Israelite people. In light of this, the fathers of the Church saw a profound connection between the Passover, which liberated Israel from slavery to the Egyptians, and the Passion, which liberated all people from the slavery to sin.

The central purpose of the Passover for the Israelites was, of course, the remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt. In the early chapters of Exodus one reads of the various plagues visited upon the Egyptians because of their stubborn refusal to release the Israelites from bondage (Ex. 7-11, cf. also Psalms 78, 105, 135:5-9, and 136:10-12). Finally, after the Egyptians were still hard of heart, the Lord in Exodus 11 resolves to send the final plague, the death of the firstborn. Yet, the Lord does not wish to destroy His own people and in Exodus 12 He gives Moses and Aaron the commands regarding the Passover. Central to these commands is the painting of the doorposts with the blood of the sacrificial lamb, which would be the mark of a member of God’s people (Ex. 12:13), even as circumcision also marked a person as a member of this same people. The next morning, the Israelites are miraculously brought out of Egypt through the Red

Sea and the Egyptian army is crushed. All of the practices of the Passover would serve to bring these things to mind in their yearly observance by Israelites down through the centuries.

The Passover thus signifies something past, but also something present. Just as the Israelites were delivered from the yoke of the Egyptians, the Israelites also longed to be delivered from enemies both external and internal. One thinks of the stories of Judith, Esther, and the Maccabees as examples of Israelites who felt themselves crushed under new persecutors and so longed for deliverance like their ancestors. The so-called penitential psalms also speak of deliverance from the internal enemy of sin. Perhaps most famously the psalmist cries out in psalm 51 for the grace of being made “white as snow” and cleansed from his sins (Ps. 51:9). This liberation from the ever-present threat of foreign powers and sin is a constant reminder for Israel of God’s continuing faithfulness and mercy. This twofold deliverance carries over into the Christian tradition as well. Christ’s Passion delivers people both from the slavery of sin and also that of the devil and his minions (Col. 2:13-15).

One of the great patristic commentaries on the relation between the Passion and the Passover comes from Melito of Sardis in his *On the Passover*. He begins with a general overview of the connection between these two great events:

3. [The mystery of the Passover] is old insofar as it concerns the law, but new insofar as it concerns the gospel; temporal insofar as it concerns the type, eternal because of grace; corruptible because of the sacrifice of the sheep, incorruptible because of the life of the Lord; mortal because of his burial in the earth, immortal because of his resurrection from the dead.

4. The law is old, but the gospel is new; the type was for a time, but grace is forever. The sheep was corruptible, but the Lord is incorruptible, who was crushed as a lamb, but who was resurrected as God. For although he was led to

sacrifice as a sheep, yet he was not a sheep; and although he was as a lamb without voice, yet indeed he was not a lamb. The one was the model; the other was found to be the finished product.

5. For God replaced the lamb, and a man the sheep; but in the man was Christ, who contains all things.

6. Hence, the sacrifice of the sheep, and the sending of the lamb to slaughter, and the writing of the law—each led to and issued in Christ, for whose sake everything happened in the ancient law, and even more so in the new gospel.

7. For indeed the law issued in the gospel—the old in the new, both coming forth together from Zion and Jerusalem; and the commandment issued in grace, and the type in the finished product, and the lamb in the Son, and the sheep in a man, and the man in God.

8. For the one who was born as Son, and led to slaughter as a lamb, and sacrificed as a sheep, and buried as a man, rose up from the dead as God, since he is by nature both God and man.<sup>27</sup>

This introduction is profound for many reasons. In a short series of comparisons Melito draws a typological history between the Old Law taken as a whole and its fulfillment in the New Law of grace. In addition he pays special attention to the Passover, which he refers to as the “model” in comparison with the Passion as the “final product.” Just as the lamb was slaughtered and its blood used to free the Israelites from the angel of death, so Jesus, as God, “replaces the lamb” and as the lamb is led to slaughter, and so delivers His people from eternal death.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, Melito continues, this is precisely why Christ has come to earth. The Greek name for Passover, Pascha, “is derived from ‘to suffer.’”<sup>29</sup> Original sin introduced suffering into the world, and brought with it “not freedom but slavery” which ultimately resulted in Man being “carried off as slaves by sin, and were led away into the regions of

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<sup>27</sup> Mileto of Sardis, On the Passover, no. 3-8, at <https://www.kerux.com/doc/0401A1.asp>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., no. 5, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., no. 46.

desire...”<sup>30</sup> This event happened literally in Israel being led into slavery into Egypt, but it also serves as a type of all of humanity made slave to sin and to unruly passions. It is by viewing these events through the lens of typology, Mileto says, that one can discover their deeper meaning. If, then, “you desire to see the mystery of the Lord...pay close attention to the one who was sacrificed as a sheep in the land of Egypt, to the one who smote Egypt and who saved Israel by His blood.”<sup>31</sup> For Mileto, the slaughter of the lamb for the Passover prefigures Christ’s Passion, and the anointing of the doorposts with its blood signifies the anointing of our hearts with Christ’s blood in Baptism. Melito draws these connections together beautifully:

67. For this one, who was led away as a lamb, and who was sacrificed as a sheep, by himself delivered us from servitude to the world as from the land of Egypt, and released us from bondage to the devil as from the hand of Pharaoh, and sealed our souls by his own spirit and the members of our bodies by his own blood.

68. This is the one who covered death with shame and who plunged the devil into mourning as Moses did Pharaoh. This is the one who smote lawlessness and deprived injustice of its offspring, as Moses deprived Egypt. This is the one who delivered us from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light, from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal kingdom, and who made us a new priesthood, and a special people forever.

69. This one is the passover of our salvation. This is the one who patiently endured many things in many people: This is the one who was murdered in Abel, and bound as a sacrifice in Isaac, and exiled in Jacob, and sold in Joseph, and exposed in Moses, and sacrificed in the lamb, and hunted down in David, and dishonored in the prophets.

70. This is the one who became human in a virgin, who was hanged on the tree, who was buried in the earth, who was resurrected from among the dead, and who raised mankind up out of the grave below to the heights of heaven.

71. This is the lamb that was slain. This is the lamb that was silent. This is the one who was born of Mary, that beautiful ewe-lamb. This is the one who was taken from the flock, and was dragged to sacrifice, and was killed in the evening, and was buried at night; the one who was not broken while on the tree, who did not

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., no. 49-50.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., no. 59-60.

see dissolution while in the earth, who rose up from the dead, and who raised up mankind from the grave below.<sup>32</sup>

The Old Law does indeed have sacraments. These sacred signs are charged with meaning and can serve as a source of great instruction to the believer. Not only can the believer find in them a source for understanding Christ's work more deeply, but these sacraments can also help the believer to see God's enduring fidelity to His people and His constant work through all of salvation history.<sup>33</sup> This work is not limited, however, to the rites and precepts of the Old Law. These indeed were necessary, yet people often became more concerned with the letter rather than the spirit of the Law. To remedy this, God sends the prophets to remind his people of the deeper meaning of the Old Law. It is these prophets that the next section will examine more closely.

#### *Old Testament Parables: The Ministry of the Prophets*

It is the contention of this thesis that the Old Testament, like the New, contains parables. This leads to the question, however, of what a parable is. For the purposes of this thesis, a parable is a symbolic story or action with universal significance which communicates a moral and/or spiritual truth.<sup>34</sup> Consider, as an illustrative example, the parable of the Jeremiah's loincloth (Jeremiah 13:1-11). The Lord gives Jeremiah a strange command, namely to "buy a girdle of linen, and put it about thy loins, one that was never set in water (Jeremiah 11:1)." After wearing it for a time, ostensibly without

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., no. 67-71.

<sup>33</sup> See also *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 3, respondeo: "Therefore before Christ's coming there was need for some visible signs whereby man might testify to his faith in the future coming of a Savior."

<sup>34</sup> Cf. William Barry, "Parables" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* at New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11460a.htm>. See also Steven I. Wright, "Parables" in *The Dictionary of Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 559-562.



washing it, Jeremiah is then commanded to take the girdle and “hide it...in a crevice of the rock” by the river Euphrates (11:4). After leaving the girdle there for many days, Jeremiah is commanded to return and in doing so discovers that the girdle is rotten (11:6-7). The Lord then explains the import of this act, which is worth quoting at length:

Not less the great pride of Juda, the great pride of Jerusalem, must perish. 10 Here is a rebellious people that will not listen to my call; they must needs take their own false path, courting alien gods and submitting to their worship. No better, then, than yonder useless girdle; 11 close as a man’s girdle fits about his loins I had bound Israel and Juda to myself; my people they were to be, my renown and prize and pride; but no, they would not listen (11:9-11).

As noted in the definition above, the story of Jeremiah’s loincloth is symbolic. That is, the story was not a practical exhortation to good clothing care or personal hygiene. Rather, though the example of Jeremiah’s actions with the loincloth has its origin in reality, it is in a certain sense “fictionalized”, that is, the literal sense is used to convey a message on a higher level.<sup>35</sup> What is important here, however, is that the word symbolic should not be simply equated with fictional; the connection with reality is central to the applicability of the story.<sup>36</sup> More fundamentally, symbolic here also should not be taken to be synonymous with abstract. Symbols are vehicles which communicate meaning through concrete representations which are familiar or relatable to the intended audience. The more widely relatable the representation, the more universally applicable the symbol is.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Peter Ellis, *The Men and the Message of the Old Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1963), 383: “In a simple parable on the other hand, the words are taken in their proper literary sense but the story or comparison as a whole conveys a lesson or a meaning in another order. It is an extended comparison in which the central feature, but not the details, illustrate the teaching intended by the author.”

<sup>36</sup> For, if the story were totally fictional and absurd, the listeners would find in it no application to themselves.

This connects to the second part of the definition, the universal significance. This simply means that the story is not so tied-down to the particular exigencies of a given time as to be inaccessible to later generations. Everyone can relate to the importance of the girdle for hygienic reasons and the problems of not washing it for long periods of time. Part of the universal significance of parables is that certain elements can be transposed while retaining the overall structure. However, care should be taken that when this is done, the original symbolism is retained as far as possible. In the parable from Jeremiah, there is a special significance that the loincloth was chosen as opposed to another article of clothing. The loincloth has a particular closeness to the intimate parts of the body that, say, a shirt or tunic wouldn't have.

This underlying message is the third piece of the definition. Note that in the definition the phrase used is that the parable communicates either a moral truth, a spiritual one, or both. Indeed, parables often have several complementary layers of meaning that one can draw out over time. The Lord, then, in His explanation of the parable, draws out the primary meaning. The girdle is something which, as the Lord alludes to in verse eleven, adheres close to a man's loins, closer than any other part of his clothing. So too, the Israelites were supposed to be close to the Lord, closer even than the girdle is to the loins. But because of their rebellion and sin, they have become spoiled, rotten, and useless. Note that this parable can be read with reference not simply to Israel, but to all believers as well. The Christian is called to a closeness with God which is deeper still than that to which the Israelites were called. Through the life of grace, the Holy Trinity dwells within each soul in the state of grace, and through sacramental communion Christ comes to dwell intimately in the soul of each worthy communicant. In

this sense God becomes more intimate, more foundational to man than man is to himself. This multivalent nature of parables will be important later on in the discussion on liturgical reform.

Note, however, that the primary meaning of this parable is the reminder of the essence of the Law. This aspect of parables is especially clear in the New Testament. Yet, it also plays a similarly fundamental role in Israel's dramatic struggle for self-identity and fidelity to God's covenant. As Jeremiah explains, the primary purpose of the covenantal relationship with God is to be close to Him, eventually being united to Him through grace. To be able to receive this relationship, one must be totally dedicated to God, rejecting from one's life whatever hinders union with God. At the same time, once one understands the essence of the Law via the reminder offered by the prophets, ceremonial and dietary laws take on a new and deeper meaning.

This is what many moderns misunderstand about the myriad of prescriptions of the Old Law. It is not a haphazard compilation of arbitrary divine fiats. Rather, the various prescriptions about not mixing threads, not eating "ambiguous animals" (namely, animals which don't fit cleanly into the category of land-dwelling or ocean dwelling, etc.) and such prescriptions are meant to be in themselves parables. They are meant to remind the Israelites constantly of their need to be holy, totally set apart for God. This is the purpose of circumcision, of the blood on the doorposts, and of these laws. The Israelites were not to be watered down by mixing with the pagan cultures around them, but were to be as it were undiluted in their faith and devotion to the almighty. Free from this

contamination, they are in a position to receive the calling of God which draws them into a closeness with Him, which is closer than that of the girdle to the loins.<sup>37</sup>

Jeremiah serves as a case study on the prophetic parables, though many others could be mentioned, such as the various actions performed by Ezekiel in chapters four and five of his book. These and the other actions and exhortations have as their singular goal the recalling of Israel to its original vocation. This is done through concretizing or, perhaps more boldly, making the Law incarnate in the various parables. Both the sacraments and the parables of the Old Law provide a way for physical reality to be used to lead Israel into a deeper knowledge and love of God. But, as stated above, they point forward to Christ. It is Christ, God incarnate, who will radically transform Israel's vocation to one of intimate spousal union with God. To do so, Jesus Himself brings a New Law, concretizing it through new sacraments and distilling its essence through His own parables. It is to this work of Christ that this thesis will now turn.

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<sup>37</sup> The inspiration for these insights comes from Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), especially chapters 7-8.

## Chapter Two: The Ministry of Christ

Jesus as “the Way, Truth, and the Life”

### *Fulfilling the Old Law*

Having prepared His people by the Old Law with its sacraments and parables, “in the fullness of time” God sent His Son (Gal. 4:4). Jesus came, heralded by John the Baptist, as the long-awaited Messiah. At his coming, already His mission was acknowledged as John proclaimed Him “the Lamb of God...who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).” But Jesus did not wish to accomplish this mission immediately. Rather, He wished to work within the Jewish system into which He entered, not abolishing the Law or the prophets but using them to prepare the people for their fulfillment (Cf. Matt. 5:17).<sup>38</sup>

What exactly is meant by fulfillment? An analogy drawn from philosophy will offer clarity. In philosophy, one speaks of a distinction between substance and accidents. Accidents are things such as color, relation, place, etc. and the substance is that in which the accidents inhere.<sup>39</sup> The accidents can change while not causing a parallel change in the underlying substance.<sup>40</sup> For example, a man who has brown hair will eventually come to have white hair as he grows older. The underlying substance, the man, did not change, but the accidents (in this case, hair color) did. One can say, then, that when Jesus comes to fulfill the Old Law He effects an accidental change, not a substantial one. Hence, when Jesus says He did not come to abolish the Law, He speaks the truth, since He did not change the substance of the Law.

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<sup>38</sup> For more on Jesus fulfilling the Law, see Levering, “Scriptural and Sacramental Signs”, 101-104.

<sup>39</sup> See Aristotle, *Categories*, 4, 1b25ff.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 4a10.

A related notion is that of act and potency. This distinction was developed by Aristotle as a way to account for the reality of change against Parmenides.<sup>41</sup> According to this view, things have certain potencies or potentials flowing from their natures which are then actualized by something already in act. For example, infants have the potential to speak, but they have to be taught this by their parents. Or, I have the ability to learn a language I don't know, such as Swahili. When I begin to learn this language, I've actualized this potency. Thus, contra Parmenides, change is not from nothing to something, but rather from potency to act. This distinction offers another complimentary view of fulfillment, in which Jesus does not introduce something *de novo* into the Old Covenant system, but rather draws out what lies potentially within it.

This is explained in a beautiful way by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa*. In it, he discusses whether the Old Law and the New Law are distinct from one another. At first glance, it would seem as if they are, but Thomas offers a more precise way to think about the issue. "Two laws," he says, "may be distinguished from each other in two ways:" either the ends of the laws will differ, or one law will be "more closely connected to the end, and the other remotely..."<sup>42</sup> To illustrate the first type of distinction, he points to a difference between a law meant for a democratic government, and one for an aristocratic government.<sup>43</sup> The other distinction, which he ultimately says is right, is illustrated by one law meant for adults, and the same law, but adapted for the education of children.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Old and New Laws are distinct in that the New Law is closer to the end, which is "man's subjection to God," whereas the Old Law is more

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<sup>41</sup> See Aristotle, *Physics*, 19, 191b35-192a2.

<sup>42</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 107, a. 1, respondeo.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

removed.<sup>45</sup> Thomas turns to Paul's letter to the Galatians in applying this distinction to the Old and New Laws.

“The law was our tutor, bringing us to Christ (Gal. 3:24),” says St. Paul. The word translated as tutor here as tutor is “pedagogue” in Latin, in other words a school teacher. Applying the philosophical distinctions from earlier, one could say that the law for adults and that for children is the same in substance, differing only accidentally. Likewise, the law for children contained potentially within it the law for adults. For example, one needs to learn geometry and arithmetic before one can engage in the craft of architecture. In a similar way, the Old Law gave to the Israelites the fundamentals that, if properly observed, would allow them to eventually leave behind the Old Law and live in the more perfect law of grace.

Just as the Old Law had its Law and prophets, so Jesus fulfills them by bringing a New Law and Himself being “the Supreme Prophet promised in the Old Covenant...”<sup>46</sup> Jesus's fulfillment of the Old Law can be viewed through His self-designation as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6),” which corresponds to His offices of King, Prophet, and Priest, respectively.<sup>47</sup> This three-fold office of Christ, besides fulfilling the Old Law, also works to heal the wounded nature of man, for which the Old Law served as a sort of crutch.

### *Original Sin and the Wounded Nature*

St. Thomas, in discussing Original Sin, enumerates six effects following from the Fall. The first two, which might be called material effects, are death and bodily defects.<sup>48</sup> These are

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (London: Baronius Press, 2011): 196. See also Ocariz et al, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ* (Portland: Four Courts Press, 1994), 137-197.

<sup>47</sup> See Ott, *Fundamentals*, 195-201. See also Ocariz et al, *ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 85, a. 5, respondeo . See Ott, *Fundamentals*, 124.

not directly caused by sin, but only accidentally, insofar as the Fall removed the state of original justice. “Wherefore, original justice being forfeited through the sin of our first parents; just as human nature was stricken in the soul...so also it became subject to corruption, by reason of disorder in the body.”<sup>49</sup>

These effects are seen in the punishments which God delivers after Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit. After punishing the serpent, God turns to Eve, giving her “many pangs...many throes” to endure, and telling her that “with pangs thou shalt give birth to children (Gen. 3:16).” To Adam, the Lord gives the punishment of toil: “through thy act, the ground is under a curse. All the days of thy life thou shalt win food from it with toil; thorns and thistles it will yield thee (Gen. 3:17).” Following these punishments, God banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden, that they would not eat of the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). Now, it would seem that these punishments represent sensibility to suffering. This is obvious in the pains of childbirth, but perhaps less clear in the punishment of toil. However, the words used for work in Genesis 2 and 3 provide an answer. In Genesis 2:15, God “took the man and put him in his garden of delight, to cultivate and tend it.” The word for cultivate here is *opero*, derived from *operor*, meaning principally to work *simpliciter*.<sup>50</sup> Likewise the word for tend is *custodio*, “to watch, protect, keep, defend, guard.”<sup>51</sup> In Genesis 3, however, the word is different. The punishment God gives to Adam is that “all the days of [his] life [he] shalt win food from [the ground] with toil (Gen. 3:17).” The word here is

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> See “Operor” in *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. Charlton Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=operor&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059>, accessed 25 February.

<sup>51</sup> See “Custodio” in *A Latin Dictionary*, at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:entry=custodio>, accessed 25 February.



*labor*, which suggests “toil, exertion...hardship, fatigue.”<sup>52</sup> Given that the garden is referred to as one of delight or pleasure, and that work which brings pain or exertion is mentioned only after the Fall, it would seem that bodily suffering, whether that of sickness, pain, etc., is a result of the Fall, and that this is the sense of bodily defects.

By cutting off Adam and Eve from the tree of life, God removes from them the preternatural gift of immortality. One can see this scripturally as well in the story of Noah. As the race of man grows both in number and iniquity, God repents having made it, and swears “this spirit of mine shall not endure in man forever, he is but mortal clay...(Gen. 6:3).” No longer will man’s earthly life go on forever; man ultimately must die, and then undergo judgement for his sins (Heb. 9:27). By the Fall, the first parents of man lost the preternatural gifts pertaining to the material aspect of human nature, namely immunity from suffering and immortality. Their descendants, being made “in their image and likeness,” also lack these gifts, and are born in the state of Original Sin.

The other four effects of Original Sin concern man’s spiritual or interior senses. These four effects are ignorance, malice, weakness, and concupiscence.<sup>53</sup> Aquinas connects these four effects with a specific faculty of man, and shows how each is contrary to one of the cardinal virtues:

Again, there are four of the soul's powers that can be subject of virtue, as stated above (I-II:61:2), viz. the reason, where prudence resides, the will, where justice is, the irascible, the subject of fortitude, and the concupiscible, the subject of temperance. Therefore in so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance; in so far as the will is deprived of its order of good, there is the wound of malice; in so far as the irascible is deprived of its

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<sup>52</sup> See “Labor” in *A Latin Dictionary*, at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=labor&la=la&can=labor1&prior=labor#lexicon>, accessed 25 February.

<sup>53</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 85, a. 3, respondeo. See Ott, *Fundamentals*, 124.

order to the arduous, there is the wound of weakness; and in so far as the concupiscible is deprived of its order to the delectable, moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence.<sup>54</sup>

The four powers which Aquinas enumerates can be called the hinges of the interior life. Through the concupiscible appetite, man is attracted to what is pleasurable, and through temperance and its associated virtues learns the benefits of mortification and self-denial. Through the irascible appetite, man faces what is difficult, and through the virtue of fortitude is strengthened to overcome fear and difficulties in an easier manner. In the will man desires what is truly good, and through justice renders to each the good that is due. Finally, in the intellect man comprehends the truth, and through prudence man orders his life toward the contemplation of truth and growth in virtue. Thus these four faculties with their virtues are the hinges which anchor the door into man's soul. Original Sin weakens these anchors, making it easier for the enemy to enter through this door and claim man as his own. Christ's three-fold office, then, is ordered to strengthening these anchors, so that man can open the door for Christ and not for the enemy (Cf. Rev. 3:20 and Ps. 24:7-10).

Each of the three offices of Christ corresponds to one or more of these interior effects of Original Sin.<sup>55</sup> Following sections will examine these connections and their relation also to the fulfillment of the Old Law.<sup>56</sup>

### *Christ as Prophet and Truth*<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> For more on Christ's Three-fold office, see Aelred Graham, *The Christ of Catholicism* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1957), 206-248.

<sup>56</sup> Aquinas, in his *Commentary on Matthew*, says that Jesus is called Christ because He bears all three anointings mentioned in the Old Law, namely Priest, Prophet, and King. See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 1-12*, no. 19, trans. Jeremy Holmes and Beth Mortensen, ed. The Aquinas Institute (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2013), 7.

<sup>57</sup> Ocariz, in his work *The Mystery of Christ*, states that "these three roles [of Priest, Prophet, and King], are not separate functions; rather, they are expressions or, better, fruits, of one and the same root, the Incarnation." Ocariz, *ibid.*, 141.

Through Original Sin, man was cast into darkness, not knowing how to act as he ought. In the extreme, this ignorance led to idolatry, as reason was overtaken by the lower passions and made to worship corruptible things. To remedy this, God gave the Old Law to Moses, prescribing how to live and act rightly as the Lord's chosen people. The Law, however, was not meant to be absolute, but pointed forward to its fulfillment in Christ. The Law made use of concrete symbols (circumcision, the Temple, the Ark, etc.) which the Jews could understand in light of the culture in which they existed. However, because of man's inclination to material things, very quickly man valued the externals more than the underlying ideas.

It is in this context that Our Lord announces Himself as the Truth (Jn. 14:6) and the Light of the World (Jn. 8:12, 12:46). Indeed, Our Lord's teaching carries with it the mark of certainty precisely because of His identity as the God-Man. Jesus's teaching, then, bears divine authority.<sup>58</sup> Our Lord fulfills these roles not only by faithfully teaching the truth found in the Old Law, but deepening it.<sup>59</sup> Consideration of a few example texts will make this clear. In the Gospel of Mark, a man approaches Jesus, and asks "Master, who art so good, what must I do to achieve eternal life (Mk. 10:17)?" Jesus replies by reiterating the need to observe the commandments prohibiting adultery, theft, etc. "Master, he answered, I have kept all these ever since I grew up (Mk. 10:20)." Jesus, "conceiving a love for him" deepens this teaching, exhorting the man to "go home and sell all that belongs to thee; give it to the poor, and so the treasure thou hast shall be in heaven; then come back and follow me (Mk. 10:22)." Jesus here does not abolish the

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<sup>58</sup> See Graham, *The Christ of Catholicism*, 217ff.

<sup>59</sup> See Ocariz et al, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 146-149.

Law. He reaffirms the moral precepts, but strengthens them to include not only a negative element of refraining from immorality, but a positive element as well of detachment even from lawful goods for the sake of the Kingdom. These elements lay potentially within the Old Law, and Jesus here actualizes them to re-affirm the primary idea of total dedication to God.

Two more examples come from the Gospel of Matthew, during the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>60</sup> Jesus, following the Beatitudes, clarifies that the teaching He is giving is not in contradiction to the Old Law, but is rather its fulfillment (Matt. 5:17-19). He illustrates this by quoting two well-known commandments, namely those against murder and adultery. Both examples have a similar structure: Jesus begins by recounting what the Law says (“you have heard it said...”) before introducing His own deeper interpretation of the commandment (“but I say to you...”). Jesus upholds the teaching that murder is immoral, but deepens it, “explaining the true sense...by showing that the prohibition extends to interior acts of sins,”<sup>61</sup> so that “any man who says to his brother, Thou fool, must answer for it in hell fire (Matt 5:22).” Similarly, He upholds the teaching on the immorality of adultery, but cautions that “he who casts his eyes on a woman so as to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt 5:28).” In both cases, Jesus is introducing an accidental change. Just as a man, while remaining the same man, can grow taller or more perfect, so too the demands of the Law can grow while the Law as such is not abolished.

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<sup>60</sup> The Beatitudes proper will be treated below in the section on Jesus as King/Way.

<sup>61</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 107, a. 2, respondeo.

Jesus not only teaches via commenting on the Law. As the “Supreme Prophet promised in the Old Covenant and the absolute teacher of humanity,”<sup>62</sup> Jesus offers parables even as the Old Law prophets did. Perhaps one of the most well-known of these parables is that of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32). The outline of the story is well known: a rebellious son demands his inheritance from his father (effectively wishing he was dead) before leaving and spending it on debauchery. He then comes to his senses and resolves to return to his father as a servant, and is dumbfounded when he finds his father waiting for him, and welcoming him back with great celebration. His brother grumbles at this, and the father reminds him that “My son, thou art always at my side, and everything that I have is already thine; but for this merry-making and rejoicing there is good reason; thy brother here was dead, and has come to life again; was lost, and is found (Lk. 15:31-32).”

Recall from last chapter that a parable is a symbolic story or action with universal significance which communicates a moral and/or spiritual truth. Recall too that the primary purpose of biblical parables is to remind its hearer of the essence of the Law, both Old and New. This parable, in my opinion, provides a beautiful hinge between the Old Law and the New. First, this story is symbolic, insofar as it could be any father-son combination, but more importantly the story is used as a vehicle to communicate truth. This parable also has universal significance, for what parent does not experience sadness or even anguish when one of their children spurns them and rejects their love? Finally, this parable communicates both a moral and a spiritual truth.

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<sup>62</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 196. Ocariz et al, *The Mystery of Christ*, *ibid.*

On the moral side, this parable signifies not simply the plight of sinners (based on the immediate context) but also the state of Israel at the time. God's people had received countless blessings from God, only to reject them and demand more. God freed His people from the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Seleucids, and still His people remained mired in idolatry and hatred for the poor and the downcast. Not all was lost, however. Like the son who comes to his senses, there were some among Israel who resolved to return to the Father, even if only as servants, only to find themselves confronted with the beautiful promise of filial adoption by God (Cf. Jn. 1:12-13). This movement from the moral dimension to the spiritual dimension is carried on in the New Law by the eventual adoption of the Gentiles as part of the New People of God. They too were living among swine in their idolatry and hedonism, before recognizing their base state and seeking to return to He who is the source of every good gift (Cf. Jas. 1:17). In the conversion of these two groups as well as of sinners more broadly, there were those who could not accept that God's love was so broad. In the beginning of the chapter where the Prodigal Son is found, Jesus already confronts the Scribes and the Pharisees, who restricted God's love to those who followed the letter of the Law.

In offering parables which recall the essence of the Law, Jesus offers, as the Light and as the Truth, a remedy to the ignorance caused by Original Sin. The Law was only meant to be temporary, eventually being replaced by the New Law of love and grace.<sup>63</sup> In His teaching Jesus reveals the Father truly as a father, one who loves His children and desires their happiness. Because Jesus was the Truth, He spoke not like the other rabbis,

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<sup>63</sup> For more on this, see Copan, *op. cit.*

but like one having authority (Jn. 7:46, Mk. 1:22).<sup>64</sup> Jesus's teaching was foundational to His ministry and mission, as "to free mankind from [the devil's] slavery, [Jesus] had to first take away from humanity the spiritual darkness stemming from sin, and to bring the light of true knowledge."<sup>65</sup> His teaching, however, is not something reducible to a haphazard collection of sayings. Rather, His teaching ushers in a New Law, with its own commands which are meant to shepherd His children. It is to this shepherding, or rather Kingly office, that this essay now turns.

### *Jesus as King and the Way*<sup>66</sup>

Contrary to how modern sentiment would portray Him, Jesus is indeed a king.<sup>67</sup> The genealogies provided in Matthew and Luke both serve to emphasize Jesus's status as the descendent of David, and thus his heir (Matt. 1, Lk. 3:23-38). Further, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that "the Lord God will give [Jesus] the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob eternally; his kingdom shall never have an end (Lk. 1:32-33, cf. Ps. 132 (131): 11-12)." Finally, Jesus Himself confesses this truth before Pilate. When asked if He was a king, Jesus replies that "you have said so (Lk. 23:3)."

Jesus's Kingship is intimately connected to His status as Prophet, but more fundamentally to His identity as the God-Man.<sup>68</sup> As the King-Prophet, Jesus "dispenses the truth, preaches the good news, and teaches with authority."<sup>69</sup> In discussing Jesus as King-Prophet,

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<sup>64</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 196.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ocariz et al, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 141-146, and Graham, *The Christ of Catholicism*, 243-248.

<sup>67</sup> See Augustine of Hippo, *Harmony of the Gospels*, bk. I, c. 3, at New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1602103.htm>.

<sup>68</sup> See Ocariz et al, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, ibid. See also Pius XI, Encyclical on Christ the King *Quas Primas* (11 December 1925).

<sup>69</sup> Charles Journet, *Theology of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 56.

Cardinal Journet divides Christ's teaching into two categories, namely teaching from a distance, which "has for its purpose the preparing of the souls to receive the fullness of explicit revelation..." and teaching by contact, in which "the Gospel is announced to men."<sup>70</sup> Jesus acts as King both as Lawgiver and Judge. As Lawgiver, he recalls the essence of the Old Law and deepens it, as said above. This function is closely connected to man's reason for, as Thomas says, law directs man's reason to what ought to be done or avoided.<sup>71</sup> As Judge, Christ offers "an invitation, which would be often very gentle, sometimes threatening, but salutary,"<sup>72</sup> That is, Christ in His judgement reveals to man the results of either following or rejecting Him, so that man can make the appropriate choice. In both of these functions, Jesus as the Way re-orient's man's intellect and through it his will toward the true and highest good, as something to be desired not only as good for the individual but something born out of justice to God as our creator and redeemer. Examination of both of these functions will offer more clarity into Jesus's Kingship.

One of the central acts of Jesus's earthly ministry is the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus promulgates "the Basic Law of His Kingdom"<sup>73</sup> which "so perfectly [guides] the life of those who may be willing to live according to them that they may justly be compared to one building on a rock."<sup>74</sup> Jesus, though He does not abolish the Law, does add to it, by introducing "greater precepts of righteousness," called greater because they are more lofty than the more temporally focused or "lesser [precepts]...given to the Jews."<sup>75</sup> This is the significance, for

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 90, a. 1, respondeo.

<sup>72</sup> Journet, *Theology of the Church*, 57.

<sup>73</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 198. See also Ocariz et al, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 142-144.

<sup>74</sup> Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, bk. 1, c. 1, no. 1, at New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/16011.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., no. 2.



Augustine, of Jesus's Sermon beginning with Jesus ascending the mountain, signifying that the Law He was to give was an exaltation of the Old Law.<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, Augustine relates each of the Beatitudes to a step in the ascent of the soul to perfection, connecting each Beatitude with a gift of the Spirit. In the beginning of the journey, one must become poor in spirit (Matt. 5:1-12), and by the gift of Holy Fear “[submit] itself to divine authority, fearing lest after this life it go away to punishment.”<sup>77</sup> By the gift of piety, one becomes meek, that in the study of divine truth, one may not “be rendered unteachable by obstinate disputations.”<sup>78</sup> As one continues on this journey, eventually it must “cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light (Rom. 13:12).” This involves a certain mourning in that the soul loses the worldly comforts it once had. At the same time, through the gift of Knowledge, the soul recognizes how it is “[entangled in] carnal customs and sins...” and so learns how to overcome them.<sup>79</sup> In this work of liberation, “vehement exertion is put forth...[thus] Fortitude is very necessary.”<sup>80</sup> Likewise, in the journey to sanctity, it is necessary to receive advice from superiors, i.e. those who have trod the path and reached the summit of perfection. “But it is a just counsel, that he who wishes to be assisted by a stronger should assist him who is weaker in that in which he himself is stronger.”<sup>81</sup> Hence the beatitude of mercy corresponds to the gift of Counsel. When one develops purity of heart, one is able by the gift of Understanding to “contemplate that highest good, which can be discerned by the pure and tranquil intellect alone.”<sup>82</sup> Finally, when one becomes perfect, Wisdom “[tranquilizes] the whole

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., c. 3, no. 10.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

man” and allows man to “assume a likeness of God.”<sup>83</sup> Even at this stage, however, humility is needed, that virtue which is “complete and perfect” and grounds the perfection of the whole man.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, the Law which Christ brings, in its elucidation and exaltation of the Old Law by means of a deepening of understanding and new commands, gives man a road-map, whereby he might become perfect and be united to God, just as following just civil laws lead to the peace and flourishing of the state.

Christ as King also judges, in two ways. In the first, he “authoritatively decides concerning the obligation of the Mosaic Law,” re-interpreting it to bring out a deeper meaning, as I said above.<sup>85</sup> The second aspect of Jesus’s judgement pertains to His judgement of those who did or did not follow His regal commands. This aspect is exercised at the moment of an individual’s death, and is reiterated at the end of time when Christ will say to those who followed Him, “well done, good and faithful servant...come and share the joy of thy Lord (Matt. 25:23).” To those, however, who reject Him, he utters the terrible words “depart from me (Matt 7:23).”

Such is Jesus’s Kingship. At this point, one might object that Jesus’s commands are too hard, or even impossible, as they go against common human experience. In one sense, this is true. Jesus’s commands call us to a way of life that is more difficult than that of the worldly. Yet, “nothing can be impossible with God (Lk. 1:37),” since “we can claim a great high priest, and one who has passed right up through the heavens...[and] has been through every trial, fashioned

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals*, 198.

as we are, only sinless (Heb. 4:14-15).” By the priesthood of Christ, man is able to “come boldly...to the throne of grace...and win that grace which will help us in our needs (Heb. 4:16),” that is, the grace which will help us to carry out the Law of grace.

### *Jesus as the Life-Giving Priest*<sup>86</sup>

I will touch only briefly on the priesthood of Christ here, as I will have much more to say in the chapters that follow. While Christians generally admit that Christ is a priest, it seems that the full import of this office is not well understood. Jesus is not simply one priest among many, He is the great and eternal High Priest, the fulfillment of the Old Covenant priesthood.<sup>87</sup> St. John Chrysostom offers a beautiful explanation of how the priesthood of Christ is differentiated from that of the Old Law.

According to Chrysostom, the author of Hebrews, in Hebrews 5, engages in a comparison of the priesthood of Christ with that of the Old Law, first “[laying] down things which are common, and then [showing] that He is superior. For comparative excellence arises thus, when in some respects there is community, in others superiority...”<sup>88</sup> First, he notes what is common between Jesus and the high priests of the Old Law, namely that He is “chosen from among his fellow men, and made a representative of men in their dealings with God...to offer gifts and sacrifices in expiation for their sins (Heb. 5:1).”<sup>89</sup> What separates Christ, however, is that he is “able to feel for them when they are ignorant and make mistakes, since he, too, is all beset with humiliations... (Heb. 5:2-3).”<sup>90</sup> Jesus, however, being perfect in Himself, has no need to “present

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<sup>86</sup> See Graham, *The Christ of Catholicism*, 221-243.

<sup>87</sup> Ocariz et al, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 164-175.

<sup>88</sup> John Chrysostom, “Homily 7 on Hebrews,” no. 2 at New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240208.htm>, see also Ocariz, 166-168, for a treatment on Hebrews 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

sin-offerings for himself, just as he does for the people (Heb. 5:3).” Rather, He has been called by God to offer sins for all of humanity (Heb. 5:4).

How does He do this? Paul offers us a starting point, by referring to Christ as a “priest forever in the line of Melchisedech (Heb. 5:6, cf. Ps. 110:4).” Melchizedek, in Genesis, meets Abraham after the latter’s victory in battle and offers to Abraham a tribute or sacrifice of bread and wine (Gen. 14:18-20). Paul no doubt here has the Last Supper in mind when drawing this parallel between Melchizedek and Christ. But there is a deeper significance. Christ’s offering of bread and wine as the foundational sacrifice of the New Covenant fulfills in it all the other sacrifices of the Old.<sup>91</sup> Apart from the obvious connection to the Old Law grain offerings and wine libations, Jesus fulfills the sin offering, offering Himself as the “scapegoat” who suffers vicariously for humanity by pouring out His blood at the base of the altar of the Cross (Lev. 4:4-7, cf. Heb. 9).<sup>92</sup> His total self-gift on the Cross (of which the Last Supper was a prefigurement) fulfills the burnt-offerings (See Lev. 1).<sup>93</sup> Finally, Christ instructs the apostles to repeat His act of offering bread and wine in commemoration of Himself and His Cross, an action which would come to be called Eucharist, thanksgiving (Lk. 22:19-20).

Jesus’s Priesthood wins for humanity the treasury of grace and merit. Through this grace, man’s intellect is illuminated, His will is ordered toward its final end, and man is given the strength to order his passions so as to overcome weakness and concupiscence. This allows those who believe in Him to gain the reward of life eternal (Jn. 3:16).

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<sup>91</sup> For a description of the various types of sacrifices in the Old Law, see Lev. 1-7. For the fulfillment of the Old Covenant Sacrifices by Christ, see Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 49-52. See also Jeremy Holmes, “Our Passover Eucharist,” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 107, no. 11 (2007): 22-29.

<sup>92</sup> See Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 50, and Holmes, “Our Passover,” 26. Also Ocariz, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 168-170.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

Christ's Priesthood is precisely ordered toward this taking away of sins, and granting life (Cf. Jn. 3:16 and Matt. 1:21). By suffering on the Cross, Christ opens the fount of mercy and life to all those who dwelt in the tombs of their sins. However, this life-giving act is not limited to first-century Judaea. Christ, before He ascended, gave to His Apostles the charge to make disciples of all nations, carrying to them the good news of the life He offers them (Matt. 28:18-20). This charge, combined with the charge to perpetuate the sacrifice of the New Law, formed the seed of the Church. It is in the Church, charged by Jesus Christ to baptize and to offer sacrifice, that the life of Jesus is communicated to all of humanity who accept it. Having distinguished the three-fold office of Christ, I will now examine how this office is perpetuated in the Church.

### Chapter Three: The Ministry of Christ in the Church

“He is the Head of the Body, that is, the Church (Col. 1:18)”

#### *The Promise of the Church*

Christ did not will to remain on earth physically forever. Indeed, Jesus tells His Apostles “it is better for you I should go away” so that the Holy Spirit would come (Jn. 16:7). Yet He also promised His disciples not only that they would not be orphans (Jn. 14:18), but that He Himself would remain with them until “the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).” How was He to remain with His disciples, while being bodily absent? He had promised to Simon Peter that “thou art Peter, and it is upon this rock that I will build my Church (Matt. 16:18).” Likewise on the day of the Pentecost the Church, born on the Cross on that Good Friday,<sup>94</sup> is strengthened and manifested through the Holy Spirit overshadowing the gathered disciples<sup>95</sup>, most especially the Virgin Mary. “From Mary’s maternal relation to the human body of Christ is derived her relation to his Mystical Body, which is being formed through the centuries until the end of time...”<sup>96</sup> It is in and through the Church, the Body of Christ, joined to Christ her Head and vivified by the Holy Spirit, that Christ remains present and continues the work of salvation.<sup>97</sup>

Just as Christ identified Himself as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” so it is in the Church that humanity is aided to imitate Christ, for the end of the Church is human sanctification, which is nothing else than the transformation of the soul into Christ.<sup>98</sup> This path of

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<sup>94</sup> See Pius XII, Encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ *Mystici Corporis Christi* (29 June 1943), §28-29, see also Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), §3, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1965), 351; Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), §5, in *ibid.*; and *Catechism*, n. 766.

<sup>95</sup> See *Mystici Corporis*, §33.

<sup>96</sup> Luis Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, trans. Sr. M. Aquinas (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2003), 7.

<sup>97</sup> See also *Lumen Gentium*, §4-5.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, §5-6.

conformity to Christ is preached via the truths of the faith, and given to man in the life-giving sacraments. This chapter will speak only on the Kingship and Prophethood of Christ, leaving consideration of Christ's Priesthood for the next chapter.

### *The Kingship of Christ in the Church*

Recall from last chapter that Christ's Kingship is exercised in two primary ways: in His functions as Lawgiver and Judge. Recall, too, that this function of Lawgiver is closely tied with that of Teacher and Prophet. It is by teaching that which is true that man's minds are illumined and directed to what is good, and thus their wills follow.<sup>99</sup> Laws are given "to make those to whom it is given good," and the New Law thus directs those to whom it is given toward the highest good of union with God.<sup>100</sup> It is through laws that those who receive laws are urged to put the teaching contained within it into effect.

When Christ was preparing to ascend to the Father, He prepared His Apostles to participate in this royal office. Through the Apostles, Christ still is present and acts in His Church, though in a different way from His presence on earth. He prefigured the eschatological consummation of this office when He promised the Apostles that "in the new birth, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit there on twelve thrones, you who have followed me, and shall be judges over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28)." Though this passage has primarily an eschatological orientation, I argue it can be applied to the Apostles' role as the first leaders of the Church as well.

In his *Catena Aurea* on Matthew, Aquinas includes a quote from Pseudo-Chrysostom commenting on this passage. When Christ references the new birth, Pseudo-Chrysostom

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<sup>99</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 9, a. 1, respondeo.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 107, a. 1, respondeo.

suggests, He is also referencing “the period of Christianity that should be after His Ascension, in which men were regenerated by Baptism.”<sup>101</sup> This is further signified in that “He said not ‘when the Son of Man shall come sitting on the throne of His majesty,’ but only ‘in the regeneration when He shall sit’ ...”<sup>102</sup> A few lines later, Pseudo-Chrysostom makes an important point. “For every Christian who receives the words of Peter, becomes Peter’s throne, and so of the rest of the Apostles.”<sup>103</sup> When a believer is baptized, he becomes a throne for Christ. Likewise, when he receives and assents to the teaching of the Apostles, he becomes a throne for them, and they themselves are thrones of Christ.<sup>104</sup> Christ Himself signifies this royal power in His Apostles when He states that “He who listens to you listens to me (Lk. 10:16).” This power is then transmitted to the successors of the Apostles, the bishops, as one can see already in Acts (Acts 1:15-26).

Peter, recognizing the void left by the death of Judas, refers to the words of psalm 109. The psalm opens with a discussion of an enemy, followed by the prayer of the psalmist who asks God that “swiftly...his days [would] come to an end, and [that] his office be entrusted to another.”<sup>105</sup> Interestingly, the Latin in the Vulgate here for office is *episcopatus*, translated in the Douay-Rheims as bishopric.<sup>106</sup> Peter and the Apostles then go on to elect a successor to Judas in the person of Matthias (Acts 1:23-26). This continuation of the line is carried on also in Paul and in subsequent ministers. “With what grace God gives me,” Paul writes, “I am a minister of that Gospel (Eph. 3:7, cf. Acts 13:3).” Paul in his turn commands Timothy and Titus to preach

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<sup>101</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea in Matthaeum*, c. 19, lectio 7, at [https://www.ecatholic2000.com/catena/untitled-26.shtml#\\_Toc384506926](https://www.ecatholic2000.com/catena/untitled-26.shtml#_Toc384506926).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ps. 109 (108):8.

<sup>106</sup> The Latin here is derived from the Greek *episkopein*.



and to set others in place to preach and govern with authority (Tit. 2:21-15; 1 Tim. 4:1-16; 2 Tim. 2:1-7). Thus Christ established an authoritative line of teachers for His Church. Further, He set up Peter and his successors to “confirm the brethren (Lk. 22:31-32).” To Peter and his successors He gave power to bind and loose in matters of doctrine, as well as a supreme jurisdiction over the Church (Matt 16:18),<sup>107</sup> and to all the Apostles together He gave power to bind and loose regarding discipline in the Church (Matt 18:18).<sup>108</sup> Thus the hierarchy, the Pope and Bishops in union with Him, have authority to bind and loose the faithful in determining what is to be believed, the degrees of belief, and also has the power to exclude from the Church those who threaten this unity.<sup>109</sup> Thus, like Jesus, the hierarchy acts as both lawgivers and judges. They teach not new doctrines, but rather unfold what is contained in potency in the Deposit of Faith, developing the teaching accidentally while retaining the same substance.<sup>110</sup>

This ruling office is participated in too by the priests, who form “assistants” and “fellow workers” to the bishops.<sup>111</sup> They too have authority derived from the bishop over their parishes and the flocks entrusted to them, as well as the charge to pass on the faith in union with the hierarchy. Such is the continuation of the ruling office of Christ in His Church.

### *The Teaching Office of Christ in the Church*

Recall that Jesus taught in two main ways: reminding people of the essence of the Law and offering parables to concretize the lessons contained in His commentaries on the Law. This same system is carried on in the Church. As quoted above, the Church is the inheritor of the

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<sup>107</sup> See First Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus* (18 July 1870), chapters 1-4, at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum20.htm>

<sup>108</sup> See *Mystici Corporis* §42, and *Lumen Gentium* c. 3.

<sup>109</sup> See *Lumen Gentium*, §22

<sup>110</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965), §10, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1975), 755-56.

<sup>111</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, §20-21.

Deposit of Faith, that is, the Scriptures and the apostolic preaching, augmented by the teaching of the Fathers and later deepened by the Doctors.<sup>112</sup> The hierarchy, as Magisterium, explicates this teaching, ever retaining the same substance and drawing out potentially what lies within it.

Yet, there is a much more profound way that the Church teaches, and that is through her rites, in what I will refer to as “liturgical parables.” Recall from chapter two that a parable is a symbolic story or action with universal significance which communicates either a moral truth, a spiritual truth, or both. This definition sufficed for discussing parables in the Scriptures. I would argue, however, that this definition can also apply equally as well to actions of the liturgy. To explore this in more depth, I turn now to insights developed by Romano Guardini.

### *Liturgical Style and Liturgical Parables*

Guardini speaks of “style” in two senses. The first, universal sense refers to “those particular characteristics which distinguish every valid and genuine production or organism as such...it denotes that any given vital principle has found its true and final expression.”<sup>113</sup> However, it is important to note that “this self-expression must be of such a nature that it simultaneously imparts to the individual a universal significance, reaching far beyond its own particular sphere.”<sup>114</sup> It is this tension between individuality and universality that stands at the heart of style *in genere*. “The greater the originality and forcefulness of an individual thing, the greater its capacity of comprehensively revealing the universal essence of its kind, the greater is its significance.”<sup>115</sup> Consider, for example, one of the “great books” such as the Iliad. Doubtless it is an individual work in that it was developed in an Ancient Greek context and so bears the

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<sup>112</sup> See *Lumen Gentium*, *ibid.*, and Pius IX, Letter to the Archbishop of Munich and Freising *Tuas Libenter* (21 December 1863).

<sup>113</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. Ada Lane (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930), 51.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

trappings of that time. But there is also something in the way it depicts human nature that has continued to impact readers throughout the centuries. Because it depicts human nature through the lens of the gods and their offspring, it offers an original way to evaluate said nature and its inclinations. Indeed, it does so in a forceful way that shows how brutal and selfish man can be, but also his capacity for greatness. In this way the Iliad retains a universal appeal beyond its immediate Greek audience.

“In this sense the liturgy has undoubtedly created a style. It is unnecessary to waste further words on the subject.”<sup>116</sup> At the risk of wasting words, I would like to consider the style of the liturgy briefly in this sense. One has only to think of the great masterpieces of Gregorian Chant, which forms the core and standard of the Church’s sacred music to see liturgical style in action.<sup>117</sup> Certainly the music was developed in a particular time and place, but had enough originality and forcefulness (to use Guardini’s terms) to at the same time have a universal appeal, a style, in the Church as a whole. The same could be said for the gorgeous Gothic cathedrals of Notre Dame and Saint-Chapelle, and other Gothic churches throughout the world inspired by these. In short, the liturgy possesses a profound originality and forcefulness that allows its symbols and actions to transcend their original time and place of development and have a universal appeal.

Yet Guardini speaks of style in a more specific manner. In this more specialized form of style, “the individual yields place to the universal,”<sup>118</sup> and the things whose “significance is restrained to certain specific people is superseded by that which is essentially, or at least more

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> See Motu Proprio of St. Pius X *Tra Le Sollecitudini* (22 November 1903) and Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §116

<sup>118</sup> Guardini, *The Spirit*, 53.

essentially, intended for many times, places, and people.”<sup>119</sup> In a certain sense, to experience this type of style it is necessary to be removed from the specific time, place, or culture in which something is first developed. This is why, for Guardini, many moderns are more struck by ancient Greek temples than by a Gothic cathedral.<sup>120</sup> At least at the time of his writing, one could argue that the prevailing Western culture was still Christian in some sense, and so, while perhaps viewing a Gothic cathedral as beautiful in its own right, is not necessarily deeply impacted by it. It is, in some sense, “normal” for that culture. The Greek temple, on the other hand, possesses something mysterious and profound. It is Greek, undoubtedly, but yet *more* than Greek. It appeals to an inner human directedness to sacrifice, to worship of the divine. The architects of these temples successfully designed them in such a way that their Greek elements were present but “divested of [their] singleness of purpose, intensified, tranquillized, and given universal currency.”<sup>121</sup> For Guardini, the liturgy eminently possesses this sense of style.

“If we compare, for instance, the Sunday collects with the prayers of an Anselm of Canterbury...and Gregorian Chant with the popular hymn,”<sup>122</sup> one can see that the same process of being divested, intensified, tranquillized, and universalized has occurred in the liturgy. What once functioned as the daily garb of Roman citizenry now comes to signify the armor of God which the minister of the altar must wear as he leads his portion of God’s army into battle. The music of the liturgy, crafted within the lived experience of the liturgy and specifically intended for it, bears no likeness to the passing fads of modern music. This style of the liturgy has been “continually polished, elaborated and adapted” over time.<sup>123</sup> More importantly, though, unlike

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 52-3.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 57.

the Greek temple, the style of the liturgy is the expression “not of an individual, but of an organic unity,” that is, the Catholic Church.<sup>124</sup> This style or expression “steadily concentrates its whole attention on the hereafter...and as a natural result is characterized by eternal, sublime, and superhuman traits.”<sup>125</sup> As a result, the liturgy when done well, presents a “miracle of a truly mighty style.”<sup>126</sup>

Liturgical parables, then, and arguably all parables, are expressions of style, in this case the style of the liturgy. By presenting well-crafted parables stemming from a mighty style, the Church, carrying on Christ’s ministry as Teacher and Prophet, gives to her children “a school of religious training and development to the Catholic who rightly understands it.”<sup>127</sup> Because the style of the liturgy is focused on the hereafter, many of its elements will appear to have no practical purpose or be incomprehensible to a surface-level interpretation. This, far from being a flaw, is by design. If, as noted above, the end of the New Law is man’s conformity to Christ in this life and union with Him in the next, then that end should be always before the eyes of the faithful. This is why the Church’s liturgy employs (or at least should employ) music which is ethereal and removed from everyday experience; her language is “remote from everyday life,”<sup>128</sup> both in the usage of Latin and in the formal language of translations. In her adoption, historically, of styles of architecture which soar upwards to heaven, the Church points the faithful to where they are going. In the liturgy itself, the haze of incense, the flickering candles

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

and the sweet yet powerful melodies of Gregorian chant give a powerful anticipation of the heavenly liturgy.<sup>129</sup>

In the colors of the vestments, the faithful are reminded in Lent and Advent of the purple garment that Christ was clothed in before being mocked, and recall that their sins are the cause of His suffering, which ought to impel them to repentance. The use of red brings to mind the blood of Christ and the martyrs, urging the faithful to be ready to lay down their lives like them. Yet, it also signifies the triumphal power of the Blood of Christ, shed on the Cross. It also signifies the fire of the Holy Spirit which grants charity to the hearts of the faithful, which charity is most powerfully manifested in the total gift of oneself for another (Jn. 15:13). In rose vestments the faithful are urged to perseverance amid the trials of penitential seasons. Green foreshadows the coming of spring, of the new hope of the Resurrection. Black gives a powerful symbol of the sympathy of the Church with those who mourn, and indeed (in the Extraordinary Form) is the color of the Church mourning the death of her Savior, at which death the sun refused to shine (Matt. 27:45). Finally, in white the faithful are presented with a reminder of the glory of heaven where the blessed dwell in the hand of God, free from all who would seek to harm them (Wis. 3:1-3), and are urged to aspire to this glory.

These and other aspects of the liturgy serve as parables. Symbolic though they are, they possess, a universal significance flowing from liturgical style and communicate both moral and spiritual truths to the faithful. Yet, because these parables are characterized by an otherworldly orientation, there is always the risk that the parables will be misunderstood. To the modern man, untrained in the school of liturgical style, these parables can seem “formal and almost

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<sup>129</sup> This has proven especially true in my own experiences of the Extraordinary Form Holy Week services and the traditional “Rorate Mass”.

meaningless.”<sup>130</sup> Indeed Christ Himself, when presented in the Gospels apart from the liturgy, is in a certain sense more accessible to us. To one reading the Gospel, “everything is alive; the reader breathes the air of earth; he sees Jesus of Nazareth walking about the streets and among the people...”<sup>131</sup> Yet, in the liturgy, Christ is presented as “the Sovereign Mediator between God and man, the eternal High Priest, the divine Teacher, the Judge of the living and the dead.”<sup>132</sup> His human nature is now “transformed by the Godhead, rapt into the light of eternity, remote from time and space.”<sup>133</sup> All of this presents to the believer the continual need for faith, “which gives substance to our hopes, which convinces us of things we cannot see (Heb. 11:1).” Liturgical parables, then, serve to elucidate the teachings of the Church, which themselves are but elaborations on the Law given by Christ and His Apostles. More than this, it concretizes these teachings, making them accessible to believers of all walks of life. It makes the mysteries of the faith “tangible” in a sense, presenting them vividly to the believer and urging him to strive through hope to see their fulfillment.<sup>134</sup>

It is not enough, however, to simply have faith or hope, important though these are, as these will eventually pass away. The greatest of the theological virtues is charity (See 1 Cor. 13). Charity makes us friends with God,<sup>135</sup> allowing us to love Him as He loved us and ultimately gave Himself for us (Eph. 5:25). Indeed, by loving God and being loved by Him, God dwells in the believer’s heart (Jn. 14:23-24). It is this indwelling which characterizes the goal of life with God on earth, and forms a foreshadowing of and participation in the life to come in heaven. All

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<sup>130</sup> Guardini, *The Spirit*, 60.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 62

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> For more on this, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), especially chapter 3.

<sup>135</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-IIae, q, 23, a. 1, respondeo.

of this is made possible by grace. This is the striking thing about liturgical parables. Not only do they serve to elucidate and concretize the teachings of the faith, but they also either dispose the believer to receive grace (in the sacramentals) or directly convey grace (in the sacraments). Thus, just as during Jesus's lifetime the work of teaching was accompanied and confirmed by workings of miracles, so now the teaching of the Church is accompanied and solidified by the working of grace in the soul. It is this grace-giving power of the sacraments, and the indwelling which follows it, which characterizes the Priesthood of Christ in the Church, to which this thesis will now turn.



## Chapter Four: Christ's Presence in the Sacraments

“I have come so that they may have life, and have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10)”

### *The Power of the Sacraments*

Through the sacraments, Christ gives grace to the believer, and the Trinity comes to dwell within him. Thus Aquinas can say that “through the sacraments of the New Law man is conformed to Christ...”<sup>136</sup> This giving of grace and conformation to Christ leads to life for the believer. Indeed, Jesus says to Nicodemus that one cannot have eternal life without being born of water and the Spirit (Jn. 3:5-6), understood by the Church as a reference to Baptism.<sup>137</sup> Further, Christ plays an important role in the sacraments, for “when the Sacraments of the Church are administered by external rite, it is He who produces their effect in souls.”<sup>138</sup> Christ’s priestly role of giving grace to souls is continued in the sacraments, precisely because Christ is present in them. The question becomes, how is Christ present in the sacraments? How is His presence in the Eucharist different from the other sacraments?

### *Different Kinds of Presence*

Aquinas, when discussing God’s omnipresence, distinguishes three modes by which God is present in creation, namely, essence, “presence”, and power.<sup>139</sup> “Therefore, God is in all things by His power, inasmuch as all things are subject to His power; He is by His presence in all things, as all things are bare and open to His eyes; He is in all things by His essence, inasmuch as

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<sup>136</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 62, a. 1, respondeo.

<sup>137</sup> See *Catechism*, 1215.

<sup>138</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, §51, see also *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 64, aa. 3 and 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 8, a. 3.

He is present to all as the cause of their being.”<sup>140</sup> Aquinas uses the image of a king in his kingdom to explain these three modes:

But how He is in other things created by Him, may be considered from human affairs. A king, for example, is said to be in the whole kingdom by his power, although he is not everywhere present. Again a thing is said to be by its presence in other things which are subject to its inspection; as things in a house are said to be present to anyone, who nevertheless may not be in substance in every part of the house. Lastly, a thing is said to be by way of substance or essence in that place in which its substance may be.<sup>141</sup>

Presence here may perhaps be better said as knowledge to avoid confusion. I argue that each of these three modes of presence can be applied analogously to Christ in the sacraments.

The Catechism states that, although Christ is present in many ways to the Church, “He is present...most especially in the Eucharistic species.”<sup>142</sup> This presence, the Catechism continues, is unique, providing the summit and end of the other sacraments.<sup>143</sup> It then goes on to reiterate a crucial and revealing formula from the Council of Trent, which states that in the Eucharist, “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.”<sup>144</sup> The word substantially means that Christ is not present locally, as He was, say, on the Mount of the Beatitudes, but rather by way of His substance.<sup>145</sup> In this way Christ is present by His substance only in the Eucharist, whereas

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., respondeo.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> *Catechism*, 1373, quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §7.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 1374.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., quoting Council of Trent, session 13, *Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist* (11 October 1551), chapter 1, at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent/thirteenth-session.htm>, accessed Jan. 15.

<sup>145</sup> See *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 76, a. 5.

by His divinity as God He is present everywhere. Christ's presence by knowledge and power provide a connection to my discussion of liturgical parables, and will play a role in my discussion of liturgical reform in the next chapter. To explore these two modes of Christ's presence, I will draw on insights from four modern theologians: Dom Odo Casel, OSB; Dom Anscar Vonier, OSB; Coleman O'Neill; and Louis Bouyer, Orat.

### *Odo Casel and Mystery*

Dom Odo Casel, in discussing the sacraments, focuses on their role in making present the mysteries of the life of Christ, even the mystery of Christ Himself. For Casel, a mystery in a basic sense "is something which of its very nature belongs to God and is, therefore, closed to unaided reason, something God's grace must reveal if it is to be made known."<sup>146</sup> Christ, for Casel, is the mystery *par excellence*. Indeed, "the content of the mystery of Christ is...the person of the God-man and his saving deed for the Church."<sup>147</sup> The liturgy is thus the participation of the faithful in this mystery. Importantly, when the faithful participate in the liturgy and the sacraments, they do so 'mystically,' a type of participation that is "something mediate between a merely outward symbol and the purely real."<sup>148</sup> Further, this mystical participation in the mystery of Christ means that it is ultimately a participation in Christ's redemptive work, in order that the glorified Christ may ultimately be produced in man.<sup>149</sup>

On the face of it, what Casel calls mystery is essentially a liturgical parable. Like

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<sup>146</sup> Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, ed. Burkhard Neunheuser (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1962), 11-12.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>149</sup> See *ibid.*, 14-15.

Casel, I believe that the liturgical parables in the context of the sacraments lead us to participate mystically in the mystery of Christ. Recall that for Aquinas, God is present everywhere not only by essence, but also by presence and power. Recall too that presence means something akin to knowledge, as in Aquinas's analogy things in a house are present to a person even if that person is not present substantially in every part of the house. I would argue that, in an analogous sense, this applies to Christ's presence in the liturgical parables, and in the sacraments more broadly. Insofar as the mysteries of the life of Christ are re-presented in sign and symbol through the liturgical parables which make up the sacraments, one could say Christ is therefore present to the faithful. For example, in a Baptism, the faithful are reminded of Christ's own Baptism in the Jordan. Even though the faithful are not substantially present on the banks of the Jordan, seeing the dove and cloud, still Christ becomes present to them in this sacrament. Through this presence, the faithful are further led to recall that Baptism is a participation in the death of Christ (See Rom. 6:3). "That does not mean that the baptized bears merely an image of Christ's death upon himself, but that in him the Lord's death is fulfilled mystically...while the witness in blood shares the complete, natural reality of the Lord's dying."<sup>150</sup>

In all of this, it seems to me that Casel is trying to emphasize, but does not quite explicitly state, is the role of faith. Faith is what immerses the believer into the mystery, what allows the believer to come to a partial understanding of the mystery. Through faith, the believer can truly be said to be saved (Cf. Rom. 3:21-30), in that faith leads us to imitate Christ in His death, in the hopes of imitating His resurrection. However, faith

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<sup>150</sup> Casel, *The Mystery*, 16.

does not stand on its own. Faith is, rather, the instrument of grace (Eph. 2:8). Christ is present in the sacraments by His power precisely because in them He gives grace, and through grace, faith. It is this manifestation of Christ's presence by power that, according to Casel, is so necessary to make the mysteries of the life of Christ, even the mystery of Christ Himself, known. I will speak more on the importance of faith in considering the next theologian, Dom Anscar Vonier.

First, however, I should note several criticisms of Casel's view which I have. In speaking of the sacraments as mysteries, that is, "sacred rites which imitate and pass on the mystery of Christ,"<sup>151</sup> he specifically states that "the old covenant had no mysteries [because] in it God had not yet appeared as man among us, not yet died for us on the Cross..."<sup>152</sup> In one sense this is true; because the sacraments of the Old Law predated the Passion, they could not give grace like the sacraments of the New Law, precisely because Christ had not yet come. However, it seems the sacraments of the Old Law could be called mysteries in some sense analogous to what Casel is discussing here. Recall that the sacraments of the Old Law are "certain signs protesting that faith through which Man is justified."<sup>153</sup> Aquinas, in discussing the relation of the sacraments of the Old Law to the Passion, states that "Christ's Passion is the final cause of the old sacraments."<sup>154</sup> Now, the final cause determines the other causes, since "the final cause...precedes in the intention of the agent."<sup>155</sup> Further, the old law sacraments were instituted because "it became necessary, as time went on, that the knowledge of faith should be more and more

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<sup>151</sup> Casel, *The Mystery*, 16.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>153</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 4, respondeo, in Vonier, *op. cit.*, 9.

<sup>154</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

unfolded...consequently, in the old law there was also a need for certain fixed sacraments significant of man's faith in the future coming of Christ."<sup>156</sup> These sacraments thus "were more like the thing signified...i.e. the Passion of Christ, as appears from the Paschal lamb and such like..."<sup>157</sup> Thus, the sacraments of the old can be said to imitate, in a veiled way, the mystery of Christ, insofar as the sacrificial system points toward its consummation on the Cross. These sacraments also pass on this mystery, again in a veiled way, in that they are ordered toward enkindling faith in the future coming of Christ in their recipients. Therefore, *contra* Casel, I submit that the Old Law sacraments are mysteries, in an analogous sense.

This idea of the Old Law sacraments being mysteries is reinforced by Fr. Louis Bouyer. In his work *Life and Liturgy*, he critiques Dom Casel for deriving his conception of mystery primarily from pagan mystery rites.<sup>158</sup> Bouyer points out that, for the pagans, a mystery was not "the myth, the divine history [i.e. the original explanation of the rite]...nor was the 'mystery' the philosophical-theological digressions [which later outsiders gave to the rites]...from first to last, the 'mystery' as such was the rite and nothing else."<sup>159</sup> One can see then how this pagan notion influences Casel to focus his conception of mystery on the actual redemptive act of Christ, and to discount the Old Law sacraments as mysteries. Bouyer, however, goes on to note that a much richer account of mystery is found in St. Paul, for whom the mystery is "a plan of God for the salvation of the world..."<sup>160</sup> which isn't necessarily tied to any rite, and which finds its

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., ad 2.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., ad 3.

<sup>158</sup> Louis Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (London: Sheed and Ward/Stagbooks, 1965), 86-98.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

climax and full revelation in the Cross.<sup>161</sup> Hence, again, insofar as the sacraments of the Old Law communicate this plan, they are “sacred rites which imitate and pass on the mystery of Christ.” They are, in a word, mysteries.

Connected to this, Casel goes on to make the quite shocking claim that “this Pasch of Christ [the Eucharist] was, therefore, something completely his own, with no expression in the old covenant...”<sup>162</sup> Once again, Casel is partially right here, in that there was no thought of eating human flesh or blood, even symbolically, in the Old Law. However, if one takes the word expression in a slightly broader sense, one can see the Eucharist being prefigured already in the Old Law. Perhaps the clearest instance is in Exodus twelve, where God commands the Israelites to not only slaughter the Paschal lamb, but to also eat its flesh (Ex. 12:1-13). Thus, it makes sense that Christ, as the new Paschal lamb, would command His followers, the new Israelites, to do likewise. This foreshadowing might be termed an “expression in mystery” of the Pasch of Christ. As such, it seems that Casel is too quick to say that the Pasch of Christ lacks any expression whatsoever in the Old Law.<sup>163</sup>

#### *Dom Anscar Vonier and Faith*

“Through the sacraments of the New Law, man is conformed to Christ.”<sup>164</sup> This union with Christ in charity is the end of the sacraments, of the whole Christian life. But before man can be joined to Christ in the sacraments, there is an important first step,

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>162</sup> Casel, *The Mystery*, 32.

<sup>163</sup> See Feingold, *The Eucharist*, c. 2, especially 49-58; Holmes, “Our Passover Eucharist”; 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), §10-11, quoted in Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 51.

<sup>164</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 62, a. 1, respondeo.

namely being joined to Christ by faith. It is these two “joinings” to Christ which immerse us, in the words of Dom Casel, into the mystery of Christ. Aquinas elaborates on this point:

The power of Christ's Passion is united to us by faith and the sacraments, but in different ways; because the link that comes from faith is produced by an act of the soul; whereas the link that comes from the sacraments, is produced by making use of exterior things.<sup>165</sup>

In another part of his *Summa*, Aquinas defines faith as a virtue of the intellect which has as its object the First Truth, God Himself.<sup>166</sup> This virtue allows the believer to assent to the mysteries (in the basic sense outlined by Casel) of the faith, not because the believer has proved them by argument, but because “[God] has revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.”<sup>167</sup> Thus, faith is essentially an act of trust. This concept plays a central role for Dom Vonier, as for him, “this contact of faith makes man susceptible to the influences of Christ...; till the contact of faith be established the great redemption has not become our redemption...we are members of the human race; we are not members of Christ.”<sup>168</sup>

This insight from Dom Vonier is rooted in scripture. In particular, Matthew chapter eight provides a striking contrast between the state of one who has faith and one who does not. In the beginning of the chapter, as Our Lord enters Capharnaum, he is met by a centurion begging for the healing of his servant (Matt. 8:5-13). Jesus consents to healing the servant, proposing to come to the centurion’s house. “Lord, I am not worthy to receive thee under my roof; my servant will be healed if thou wilt only speak a word of

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., a. 6, respondeo.

<sup>166</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 1, a. 1, respondeo.

<sup>167</sup> See the Act of Faith, also *Summa*, II-II, q. 6, a. 1; q. 4, a. 1; and I, q. 1, a. 1.

<sup>168</sup> Vonier, *A Key*, 3.



command (Matt. 8:8).” Two things are worth noting here. First, the centurion recognizes his own unworthiness and his own helplessness. It seems reasonable to assume that because he was coming to Jesus, every other method of healing the servant had been exhausted. Likewise, the centurion recognizes, and has confidence in, Our Lord’s power. The centurion goes on to say, “I too know what it is to obey authority; I have soldiers under me, and I say, Go, to one man, and he goes, or, Come, to another, and he comes, or, Do this, to my servant, and he does it (Matt. 8:9).” At this, Jesus proclaims his amazement at the centurion’s faith. Through faith, then, man is joined to Christ in an act of trust and humility. He recognizes his own sinfulness, his own incapability in healing himself, and the power, love, and mercy of the Lord, who “would have [the sinner] leave his sinning, and live on (Ezk. 33:11).” It is in the posture of humble, trusting receptivity that the Lord can then immerse man in His Mystery through Baptism and the other sacraments.

In the same chapter, the text presents us with a striking counter-example to that of the centurion. Jesus, after preaching to the people, gets into a boat with His disciples to cross to the other side of the lake, and falls asleep (Matt. 8:23-27). In the meantime, “a great storm arose on the sea, so that the waves rose high over the ship... (Matt. 8:24).” At this, the disciples, terrified, wake the Lord, asking Him to save them. Jesus rebukes them as being of little faith, and then calms the storm. The disciples are rebuked, it seems to me, because they lack trust in the Lord’s power. In their moments of fright, they are so focused on their outward danger and lack of ability to save themselves that they don’t recall Our Lord’s saving power. So too, one who lacks faith is essentially denying Our Lord’s power in the world, the power to save the sinner, to quiet the storm of vice in the

life of the sinner. To use Vonier's words, such people are not susceptible to the influences of Christ.

Vonier goes on to emphasize that "there is in faith an instrumental side, enabling man to open unto himself the door that leads to perfect union with Christ,"<sup>169</sup> namely the door of charity. "Through the possession of charity we do not only get at Christ, but...we are actually in Christ."<sup>170</sup> Thus, grace makes use of faith as an instrument to lead the believer to charity, which is nothing else but union with Christ.

The sacraments are the other "joining" to Christ, and "render more efficacious that instrumentality of faith...they do not supersede [it], but they render such instrumentality more real, if possible, and certainly more infallible in its effect."<sup>171</sup> Humans are creatures of the senses, and the Church wisely makes use of sensible things to give the believer a tangible access point to the mysteries of the life of Christ. "The sacraments are essentially sacraments of faith," as Vonier says, and rightly so, in that they both presuppose faith and strengthen it.<sup>172</sup> The sacraments presuppose faith in that, in order to receive them worthily, one must trust that Christ was God incarnate, that He founded a Church with power to speak and act in His name, that man is sinful and in need of redemption, etc. Yet these sacraments, or rather Christ present in them, also strengthen faith. By His presence by knowledge, Christ makes Himself able to be known through reflecting on the various mysteries of His life. In this process of meditation, the believer comes into contact with Christ, and, through His presence by power, receives grace

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<sup>169</sup> Vonier, *A Key*, 5-6.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

which strengthens faith, strengthening that conviction of humility, trust, and surrender. Through this faith, too, the believer is led to a great charity for God. As the mystery of the Passion is applied to the believer, turned over in his mind, as its effects are experienced in the soul, the believer ought to be struck with profound awe at the seemingly reckless love of God. In the face of such love, what better response is there than to love in return?

*Coleman O'Neill and the Heavenly Liturgy*

This love, manifest through the virtue of charity in the souls of the just, is the impetus of the Christian life, and ultimately finds its consummation in the vision of God in heaven. One only receives charity (and faith and hope) through the Spirit, who is sent by the Risen Christ upon the Church. This sending is performed by Christ present in the sacraments by His power. Fr. Coleman O'Neill, in his work on the sacraments, places great emphasis on this "presence by power" of Christ.<sup>173</sup> The whole purpose of this presence by power is to conform the believer more closely to Christ, making him a perfect image of the Son. O'Neill uses a beautiful analogy to describe this process:

The sun, shining through a stained-glass window, throws on the ground an image of the glass. The Holy Spirit, coming to man through the humanity of Christ, reproduces in man the image of Christ risen from the dead. By the power of this Spirit and led by Him, the faithful live according to the "spirit," that is, not according to the "flesh," even in their bodily actions.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> For more on the presence by power of Christ, see Charles Journet, *The Mass: The Presence of the Sacrifice of the Cross* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2008), 58-62. There Cardinal Journet distinguishes Christ's substantial presence, such as the way in which He is present in the Eucharist, from what he terms His "operative presence" or presence by power, by which He applies to us the merits and graces flowing from His Passion. This distinction is, for Journet, crucial in maintaining the Mass as a true sacrifice, which sacrifice is present not substantially, but operatively. This operative presence of the Passion is also present in an analogous way in the other sacraments, in that while in the Mass the sacrifice of Christ is present in a unique and sacramental way, in addition to being present operatively, in the other sacraments His Passion is present only operatively.

<sup>174</sup> O'Neill, Colman. *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, rev. Romanus Cessario (New York: Alba House, 1991), 28.

This life according to the spirit is precisely the life of virtue, animated by grace and above all by the virtue of charity. Faith makes the faithful participate in the Passion of Christ. The Passion, in turn, increases charity,<sup>175</sup> which charity makes the faithful to participate in the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of Christ in a deeper way. In this way “the resurrection and glorification of the justified is simply an explication and a manifestation of the inner meaning and power of that one event [of Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension].”<sup>176</sup> Thomas Aquinas expounds on this, noting that both the Passion and the Resurrection are causes of the forgiveness of sins and the giving of grace. Yet, Christ’s Passion is more properly the exemplary cause of the forgiveness of sins, whereas the Resurrection is the exemplar of the giving of new life.<sup>177</sup> The Ascension, it could be said, aids faith, which allows one to become receptive to the causality of the Passion and Resurrection.

For O’Neill, another important consequence of this life in the spirit is a participation in the heavenly liturgy, in the priesthood of Christ. “All that belongs to Christian life and Christian morality must be interpreted in terms of this union with the heavenly sacrifice of Christ.”<sup>178</sup> Further, “the fact that the faithful can join in His sacrifice is itself a result of His sacrifice so that it is proper to say that Christ offers His own sacrifice by a double title: in His own person and in His mystical person.”<sup>179</sup> It is through charity that the faithful are united to Christ in the Paschal Mystery, and through

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<sup>175</sup> See *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 49, a. 1, respondeo.

<sup>176</sup> O’Neill, *Meeting Christ*, 28.

<sup>177</sup> See *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 56, a. 2, ad 4.

<sup>178</sup> O’Neill, *Meeting Christ*, 28.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

this union also become partakers of His priesthood, though of course in a limited way distinct from the ordained priesthood.

There is, however, a deeper significance to this union. For, “it is natural that those on earth united with the heavenly Christ should express in ritual the fact and significance of their union.”<sup>180</sup> Just as a lover might present his beloved with jewelry or flowers as a sign of the fact of their union and his commitment to it, so too those united to Christ should manifest the fact and significance of their union. But beyond the merely personal level, believers are part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Thus, salvation is in a sense both individual and communal, in that one is only saved through the action of Christ in the community of the Church. This leads to the fact that “the community character...of salvation in Christ requires communal expression.”<sup>181</sup> However, O’Neill goes on to caution that this is not simply due to man’s social nature. Rather, it is precisely because believers are bound together into the Body of Christ, as priests participating in the priesthood of Christ, in a “radically spiritual” way that this union needs an adequate expression, which comes through the liturgy.

O’Neill recalls what was discussed earlier about the liturgy and sacraments presupposing faith and strengthening it. He then returns to the participation of the faithful in the heavenly liturgy, which can occur in two primary ways. “The ritual of the Church is concerned immediately only with ‘vertical’ worship,” that is, the worship offered by the virtue of religion under the guidance of the theological virtues.<sup>182</sup> ‘Horizontal’ worship, on the other hand, is concerned with the daily life of the Christian, which “calls

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 32.

to the front other moral virtues, though the basic religious attitude remains constant.”<sup>183</sup>

This concept is important. These two planes of worship, vertical and horizontal, are distinct but not separate. As O’Neill continues, “one of the first requisites for an authentic liturgical spirituality is a realization that the two planes of worship differ only in emphasis and cannot be thought of as in any fashion mutually independent or exclusive.”<sup>184</sup> He goes on to make comments about the significance of these planes for the development of the liturgy, to which I will return in the next chapter.

Note that this purpose of the liturgy as manifesting the fact and significance of the union of the believer with Christ also gives rise to and strengthens the virtue of hope. Hope, for Aquinas, is a virtue which longs for eternal happiness, and though it is difficult for man to attain, relies on God’s help and his promises, since eternal happiness is nothing other than union with God.<sup>185</sup> In manifesting the union with Christ which the believer enjoys, the liturgy points to its consummation in the vision of God. It also reminds the believer of the effects of sin, and consequently of man’s utter inability to achieve this final end by himself. It thus also shows forth man’s utter dependence on God and His grace, and by recounting in the liturgical texts examples of God’s help, His goodness, His power, etc., the liturgy also cultivates in man the virtue of hope.

*Louis Bouyer: Liturgy as the Bible Concretized*

To synthesize all these disparate insights, I turn now to insights offered by Oratorian Father Louis Bouyer. In the introduction to his meditations on Holy Week, he

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>185</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 17, aa. 1 and 2.

states that his study of Holy Week “will be basically biblical, for liturgy is the life reflected in the pages of the Bible, concretized in a devotional action, the liturgical text being hardly more than an application of the biblical original set in vivid relief.”<sup>186</sup> This, I submit, holds the key for everything I have been discussing in this chapter, and so, by way of summary, I will briefly recount the major themes from this chapter through the lens of this statement by Bouyer.

From Dom Odo Casel, I maintained that the sacraments and the liturgy are themselves mysteries, divine actions which imitate and pass on the mystery of Christ. To understand these mysteries, grace is needed which works through faith in the believer, so that the believer participates “mystically” in the mysteries represented in the sacraments. These mysteries are essentially akin to what I have termed liturgical parables, in that they are symbolic acts which communicate moral and spiritual truths and which require faith to decipher. These mystery-parables, if they might be called such, immerse the believer by faith into the mystery of Christ, primarily in His death. Thus, the mysteries of the sacraments bring to vivid relief the events of the life of Our Lord, most especially His work of redemption, and concretize them in a visible, devotional act.

From Dom Vonier, I reflected further on the necessity of faith, which is essentially an act of trust in God’s truthfulness and power. Such an act is fundamental to being immersed in the mystery of Christ, and is indeed a necessary prerequisite. Yet the mysteries also strengthen faith, and faith thus strengthened serves as an instrument for enkindling charity in the believer. Indeed, if the liturgy, as Bouyer seems to argue, is an

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<sup>186</sup> Bouyer, Louis. *The Paschal Mystery: Meditations on the Last Three Days of Holy Week*, trans. Sister Mary Benoit (Chicago: Regnery Press, 1950), xxi.

outgrowth (or perhaps more boldly, an Incarnation) of the Bible, and if the Bible is held to be an inspired book, then faith is necessary to accept the Bible as both the “raw material” for the liturgy, but also the interpretive key through which to view the liturgy. Faith thus seems to lead the believer into a reciprocal relationship between the Bible and the liturgy. Through faith the believer sees the breath of God moving in the biblical texts which make up the liturgy and sacraments. Yet, faith also helps the believer to read the Bible in and through the liturgy, as the liturgical text, for Bouyer, is simply the biblical text in relief.

Finally, the discussion on Fr. O’Neill focused on the presence of Christ in the believer by His power, in sending the Spirit to the believer, Who brings with Him grace and the virtues. All of the virtues in the believer are animated by charity, which really unites the believer to Christ, in a union which will be perfect in heaven. Such a unity with Christ binds believers into His Mystical Body, giving the life of grace and salvation a character which is both individual and communal. Just as lovers express their love by outward signs, so the Mystical Body, the Church, the Bride of Christ, expresses the union of Christ with His Church. This expression of union has both an individual and a communal element, which are respectively vertical and horizontal in orientation. Vertical, insofar as the believer offers right and due worship to God, and is oriented toward his final end, and thus encouraged in hope. Horizontal, insofar as this worship occurs within the Mystical Body of Christ, and thus orients believers toward one another, in living out the grace and virtues in the moral life. Together, these two planes represent the incarnational nature of liturgy as something both divine and human, what Bouyer calls the concretization of the “life reflected in the pages of the Bible.”



“Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).” Christ promised that He would remain with His Church always, and that He would also “not leave [her] orphaned (Jn. 14:18)” but would send “another advocate (Jn. 14:16)” to vivify her and guide her. Christ remains with His church in a fundamental (though not exclusive) way through her liturgy and sacraments. He dwells therein substantially in the Blessed Sacrament, a “prisoner in the tabernacle” and “prisoner of Divine Love” as the evocative (even if somewhat problematic) phrases of the old devotional books speak.<sup>187</sup> He is present by knowledge in the sacraments and the liturgy by way of knowledge, that by meditating upon Him and the mysteries of His life, the believer might be strengthened in faith, hope, and charity, which by His presence by power He gives to the faithful through the sending of the Spirit. Through this strengthening, Christ guides and even impels the faithful to strengthen their union with Him until it is perfected in the hereafter. This journey toward union is essentially the purpose of the liturgy. As author David Fagerberg says, “the aim of liturgy is holiness, and the mystic is a holy person.”<sup>188</sup> Mysticism, which is man’s ascent to God, is begun by, nourished by, the liturgy, as in liturgy God descends, calling man to ascend and giving him strength to do so.<sup>189</sup> From this, much rides on what occurs during the liturgy, and whether it is done well or poorly. Thus, I turn now to the question of the form and reform of the liturgy.

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<sup>187</sup> See, for example, Fr. Lasance’s *Blessed Sacrament Prayer Book*

<sup>188</sup> David Fagerberg, *Liturgical Mysticism* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2019), 2.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter Five: Liturgical Parables in Practice

“Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi”<sup>190</sup>

### *Mystery and the Incarnation in the Liturgy*

From all that has gone before, I now propose to set out some key principles which ought to govern any liturgical action and reform. To begin, I want to revisit two crucial themes which I have developed throughout this thesis, namely the mysterious character of the liturgy and sacraments, and their Incarnational nature.

For Dom Casel, mysteries are essentially divine acts, which need grace and faith in order to be understood. He applies this usage of mystery to the sacraments, as they are acts which reveal the mystery of the Passion of Christ. This usage can be extended further to the liturgical parables as a whole. Aquinas, when speaking of the sacraments in general, communicates two important truths concerning them. First, the sacraments are “things which are ordained to signify [man’s] sanctification,”<sup>191</sup> that is, “a sign of a holy thing insofar as it makes men holy.”<sup>192</sup> Given this, Aquinas then divides three ways in which the sacraments can signify this sanctification: “In [the sacraments] three things may be considered; viz. the very cause of our sanctification, which is Christ’s passion; the form of our sanctification, which is grace and the virtues; and the ultimate end of our sanctification, which is eternal life.”<sup>193</sup> The way the sacraments signify these various causes of sanctification is precisely through the liturgical parables which compose them.

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<sup>190</sup> The Law of Prayer is the Law of Belief, which is the Law of Living.

<sup>191</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 60, a. 3, respondeo.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 2, respondeo.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 3, respondeo.

Recall that a liturgical parable communicates either a moral truth, or a spiritual truth, or both. This aligns with the threefold signification just elaborated. The efficacy of Christ's Passion and its necessity for the sacraments is a great spiritual truth, yet also a mystery. The life of grace and the virtues is a dual truth, on the one hand spiritual insofar as one might study the causes of grace and the hierarchy of the virtues, but also moral in that it guides the faithful in cultivating the virtues they need in their particular situations. Finally, the final end of man's sanctification, heaven, is also a dual truth, in that one can consider it from the point of view of the moral life needed to enter heaven, and also from the spiritual point of view in considering what heaven is like, the joys that accompany it, etc. Yet all these things are also mysteries, in the sense elaborated from Dom Casel above. Insofar as the liturgical parables communicate these ideas, they too should retain a mysterious character. Yet there is another set of mysteries communicated through the liturgy, namely those of the person and life of Christ, and really all of salvation history. Christ present by knowledge in the sacraments makes himself know-able, and through the liturgy the drama of God's pursuit of man is brought to life.

What, then, is the proper response when confronted with mystery? The Scriptures point the way for us. Moses, when the Lord comes before him on Mount Sinai, prostrates in fear and worship (Ex. 34:8). Elijah, when God passes by, veils his face before His awesome presence (1 Kgs. 19:13). When these two great figures appear with Jesus on Mount Thabor, and when the voice of the Father speaks from the cloud, the three chosen Apostles prostrate also (Matt. 17:6-8). Silence, holy fear, humility. These three characteristics should inform our response to the mystery of Christ, made present in the mystery of the Liturgy. The early Christians appeared to understand this as well, as they cried out in their liturgy "let all mortal flesh keep silence!"

Cardinal Ratzinger, in his seminal work *Spirit of the Liturgy* develops a consequence of this mysterious character of the liturgy, as being an essentially divine act. For Ratzinger,

Real liturgy implies that God responds [to man] and reveals how we can worship Him. In any form, liturgy implies some kind of ‘institution.’ It cannot spring from imagination, our own creativity---then it would just remain a cry in the dark of mere self-affirmation. Liturgy implies a real relationship with Another, who reveals Himself to us and gives our existence a new direction.<sup>194</sup>

Ratzinger thus reveals the fundamental “other-ness,” the mysterious character, of the liturgy, as a divine act revealed to man, which then leads man back to God. The important point here is that liturgy is in a certain sense “God-given,” through the Holy Spirit guiding the Church, and not the product of human creativity or innovation.

This emphasis on mystery corresponds to O’Neill’s “vertical” plane of worship, as well as to the emphasis on faith developed by Dom Vonier. This vertical plane depends on the virtue of religion, which as Aquinas states denotes in one sense a relation to God.<sup>195</sup> This relation is characterized by a humble acceptance of what God offers, as He offers it, and also a proper attitude of holy fear and reverence in the face of the mystery. This attitude of humility is fundamentally an element of faith, which allows us to enter into the mystery. Yet, liturgy is also Incarnational. The events which it recalls occurred in history, in time and space. Thus, “the ceremonial of the Church reflects the temporal interests of Catholics at different periods.”<sup>196</sup> Some elements of the liturgy carried over from the synagogue service, others entered the liturgy from the East, others

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<sup>194</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 22.

<sup>195</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 81, a. 1.

<sup>196</sup> O’Neill, *Meeting Christ*, 33.

from monastic uses, etc.<sup>197</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger develops a similar idea, including the importance of tradition in the Incarnational nature of liturgy:

First, it is important that the individual rites have a relation to the places where Christianity originated and the apostles preached: they are anchored in the time and place of the event of divine revelation. Here ‘once for all’ and ‘always’ belong together. The Christian faith can never be separated from the soil of sacred events, from the choice made by God, who wanted to speak to us, to become man, to die and rise again, in a particular place and at a particular time...The Church does not pray in some kind of mythic omnitemporality. She cannot forsake her roots.<sup>198</sup>

Ratzinger goes on to discuss how the different rites of the liturgy which grew up within Christendom can be traced back in some way to the major centers of the faith, namely Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Byzantium.<sup>199</sup> Further, “what is important is that the great forms of rite embrace many cultures...they elude control by any individual, local community, or regional Church.”<sup>200</sup> The liturgy grows organically, like a beautiful rose bush, incorporating the good things of the culture in which it finds itself, but always in a way which remains coherent with what has come before. The liturgy also remains, as said above, a mystery, something of divine origin, which grows by divine guidance, and reveals the divine mysteries.

At this point, Ratzinger touches on an important issue particularly for the Western Church, namely the authority of the Pope. “With his Petrine authority, the Pope more and more clearly took over responsibility for liturgical legislation, thus providing a juridical

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<sup>197</sup> See Alcuin Reid. *The Organic Development of the Liturgy* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2005), chapter 1.

<sup>198</sup> Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 164.

<sup>199</sup> See *ibid.*, 160-163.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

authority for the continuing formation of the liturgy.”<sup>201</sup> Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, specifies the extent of the Pope’s power over the liturgy:

The sacred liturgy does, in fact, include divine as well as human elements. The former, instituted as they have been by God, cannot be changed in any way by men. But the human components admit of various modifications, as the needs of the age, circumstance and the good of souls may require, and as the ecclesiastical hierarchy, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, may have authorized. This will explain the marvelous variety of Eastern and Western rites. Here is the reason for the gradual addition, through successive development, of particular religious customs and practices of piety only faintly discernible in earlier times. Hence likewise it happens from time to time that certain devotions long since forgotten are revived and practiced anew. All these developments attest the abiding life of the immaculate Spouse of Jesus Christ through these many centuries. They are the sacred language she uses, as the ages run their course, to profess to her divine Spouse her own faith along with that of the nations committed to her charge, and her own unfailing love. They furnish proof, besides, of the wisdom of the teaching method she employs to arouse and nourish constantly the "Christian instinct."<sup>202</sup>

As is the case with the doctrinal authority of the Pope, he is “the guarantor of obedience to the revealed Word. The Pope’s authority is bound to the Tradition of the faith... [the liturgy] is not ‘manufactured’ by the authorities.”<sup>203</sup> Revealed Truth and Tradition form the bounds within which the Pope can legitimately act, as he, together with the hierarchy, draws out those elements which lay latent in the earlier liturgies, thereby fostering piety and devotion to the faithful. This obedience to Sacred Tradition ensures that the liturgy preserves its greatness which, as Ratzinger notes, is its “unspontaneity.”<sup>204</sup>

Ratzinger develops a definition of rite that ties together what has gone before. For Ratzinger, rite is “the expression, that has become form, of ecclesiality and the Church’s

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947), §50.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 165-166.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 166.

identity as a historically transcendent communion of liturgical prayer and action.”<sup>205</sup> He makes an apt comparison between the liturgy and the Bible, insofar as both “have been fashioned...by human beings and their capacities,”<sup>206</sup> but yet both the Bible and the liturgy, as Ratzinger continues, have an authority which goes beyond the particular exigencies of their formative times or places. Like I discussed several chapters ago, the liturgy has a “style,” which has its roots in a particular time and place, but contains an element of greatness, of transcendence, that remains appealing and forceful for every age. This element of the liturgy (and the Bible) comes, I submit, from the divine action and influence both within the liturgical actions themselves, but also in their formation.<sup>207</sup>

### *The Liturgy in Modern Times*

In order to apply these principles, it will be helpful to now examine a central principle of the modern conception of liturgy, namely active participation. The phrase originated with Pius X, who used it in reference to the faithful taking part in the chant of the liturgy.<sup>208</sup> Later in the same century, Benedictine Lambert Beauduin expanded on the notion of active participation by “[promoting] the recovery of an ancient understanding of the liturgy as the priestly offering of Christ, and of His Mystical Body on earth, the Church.”<sup>209</sup> Eventually, this phrase would find its way into *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The phrase used in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* has a threefold element, namely that the

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>207</sup> Obviously, the liturgy is not inspired like the Bible is, but there are interesting similarities.

<sup>208</sup> See Richard Gaillardetz and Catherine Clifford, “Full, Conscious, Active Participation in the Liturgy,” in *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 2, accessed online on Feb. 26. See also Tom Elich, “Full, Conscious and Active Participation” in *Vatican Council II: Reforming the Liturgy*, ed. Carmel Pilcher, David Orr, and Elizabeth Harrington (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2013), 28-29.

<sup>209</sup> Gaillardetz and Clifford, “Full, Conscious, Active Participation,” 3. See also Elich, “Full, Conscious, and Active Participation,” 29.

participation in the liturgy should be “full, conscious, and active.”<sup>210</sup> Understanding each of the parts of this definition will shed light on the purpose of liturgy and its reform.

The participation of the faithful in the liturgy is first of all full. That is, it is meant to incorporate the totality of the human person, interior and exterior. The faithful at the liturgy should not be merely passive observers, simply going to Mass like one goes to a movie or a theatre performance. Rather, they are called to engage their senses through outward, bodily participation through certain gestures and actions. Indeed, these form part and parcel of the liturgy, whether from the positions of the faithful at Mass, the processions of various feast days, etc. Reformers such as Pius Parsch, for example, encouraged their flocks to take part in the Divine Office, which they conducted in the vernacular in their churches, and indeed this is a good thing.<sup>211</sup>

Interiorly, there is a deeper level of participation, that of faith, which is connected with the faithful exercising their baptismal priesthood in tandem with the ministerial priesthood of the celebrant, thus making the liturgy an act of the *totus Christus*.<sup>212</sup> Tom Elich notes that *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in addition to calling for active participation, also calls for reverent silence, and directs that the exterior actions are to encourage active participation, rather than being synonymous with it.<sup>213</sup> The external actions and rites ought to lead to a more active and more profound participation through an interior meditation on the drama of the liturgy, recognizing Christ present therein substantially, by power, and by knowledge. This entails that the faithful’s participation be conscious,

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<sup>210</sup> The English translation on the Vatican website is flawed here, rendering the Latin as “full conscious [and] active.”

<sup>211</sup> See Reid, *The Organic Development*, 112-113.

<sup>212</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §7 and 14. See also *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947), §20.

<sup>213</sup> Elich, “Full, Conscious, and Active Participation,” 32.



that they seek to understand what they are doing and why. To cultivate this liturgical consciousness, however, requires several requisites to be fruitful. One of these is stability. As the saying goes, “repetition is the mother of learning.” What matters, like Ratzinger said above, is “unspontaneity.” By having a largely invariable set of texts, readings, prayers, etc., the faithful can internalize them more easily and so grow in their liturgical consciousness, leading to a deeper interior participation which will enrich the exercise of their priesthood.

Another requisite is that of silence. Being constantly outward-focused is extremely prohibitive to entering into the “inner room” where one can “pray to the Father in secret,” going up into the cloud like Moses to be with God (Matt. 6:6). *Sacrosanctum Concilium* itself says that “at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence.”<sup>214</sup> Such silence, as said above, is the natural response when confronted with the mystery, and the primary requisite for God to speak. By observing silence at proper times in the liturgy, the faithful are encouraged to turn inward, to unite their prayers with the action at the altar, to meditate on what they are experiencing, etc.

Here I disagree with Elich. In his discussion on active participation, he says that:

Liturgical silence is not a retreat into private mediation: it is a moment for the gathered faithful to hold sacred God’s action in the midst of the assembly, sharply aware of each and all in the corporate action of the Church.<sup>215</sup>

I would argue that Elich is making a false dichotomy. The Liturgy is indeed, as said above, the action of the whole Church united to Christ. This does not mean, however, that

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<sup>214</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §30.

<sup>215</sup> Elich, “Full, Conscious, and Active Participation,” 42.

it becomes a sort of liturgical collectivism, where the individual is subsumed into the conglomerate of the assembly and only exercises their action as part of it. Rather, each of the faithful will internalize the liturgy and its parables in their own way, and respond in their own way. Each of these ways of experience and response, much like the different senses of Scripture, all complement one another and add to the beauty of the communal experience of the liturgy and the response of the community to it. I will agree with Elich, though, that one's "private meditation" should be ordered toward the communal benefit and response, and not become a way to detach from the communal aspect of the liturgy.

One of the other prescriptions of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is that:

the rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people's power of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.<sup>216</sup>

Insofar as the liturgy is both an offering of adoration and thanksgiving and an occasion of teaching for the faithful, this is true. *Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*. If the rites are onerously long and muddled in their symbolism, this will be a detriment to the faithful. Yet, this text is vague in its critiques. What makes a rite short versus long? Who defines what is clear? What makes a repetition useless? This last point in particular seems to fly in the face of the saying "repetition is the mother of learning." Because of human nature and its limitations, frequent repetition is needed to fully grasp an idea set before it. For example, in the older liturgy the "Lord, I am not worthy..." before communion was said not just once, but thrice. There is wisdom in this, in that on the first pass, the worshipper might be distracted and so not focus on what one is saying. By repetition, though, one is

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<sup>216</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §34.

“nagged” as it were, by the text or gesture, as if it were demanding to be noticed, internalized, and appreciated.

Likewise, it is true that the rites of the Mass should not require tendentious explanations which strain credulity to be understood. However, again, the Mass is a mystery. Does this mean one should not explain it at all? By no means. There is an analogy here with the doctrine of the Trinity. The Church has always held that this doctrine cannot be comprehensively known in this life,<sup>217</sup> nor even known by unaided reason. Rather, one can have some knowledge through faith, and this only “as a confused reflection in a mirror (1 Cor. 13:12, Knox).” Indeed, the Church has penetrated deeply into the mystery of the Trinity, culminating in the beautiful confessions of faith such as the Nicene Creed and the so-called Athanasian Creed. Yet, paradoxically, the more one penetrates into the mystery, the more it’s mysteriousness impresses itself on the mind, ever challenging “thus far thou shalt come...and no further (Job 38:11).” So too with the liturgy. The faithful, under the guidance of their pastors and bishops and with the aid of faith, should be encouraged to study the liturgy, to see for themselves its beautiful tapestry of parables. Yet, one must avoid stripping away from the liturgy its mysterious character or its difficult aspects in the name of being understood.

Elich, as well as Gaillardetz and Clifford, also touch on the place of devotional imagery in the Church in relation to the liturgy. Such imagery is important, as different faithful, with different temperaments, will be drawn to different devotions. These devotions also serve as liturgical parables in their own way, giving the faithful concrete

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<sup>217</sup> See, for example, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 32, a. 1.

ways of applying the teachings of Christ in their lives. Gaillardetz and Clifford argue that side altars, for instance, were made purely for the purpose of accommodating private Masses, something now discouraged by the Council.<sup>218</sup> While this was indeed one function of side altars, it is by no means the only one. Side altars are also a beautiful way of representing “the wonderful fruits of the only Sacrifice of Christ: the Saints and their works.”<sup>219</sup> Devotional altars add to the tapestry of symbols of the liturgy, and help awaken, now this sentiment, now another, in the lives of the faithful as the cyclical march of the liturgical year carries on. Further, the fact that these are devotional *altars* conforms well to the general sentiment of the Council discussed above, namely that such devotions, being as they are entry points for personal meditation on the liturgy, should be oriented to the Mass, the communal offering of the *totus Christus*.

Again, just as the scriptures can be interpreted in different ways, so too the parables of the liturgy, while always being rooted in the “literal” meaning,<sup>220</sup> guided by the bounds set by Sacred Tradition and the teaching of the Church. The liturgy, with its myriad of parables, when celebrated with reverence and with opportunities for silence, and when experienced through the lens of devotions which aid the temperament of each, is truly the Bible come to life. It is a never-ceasing fountain of inspiration, a gold mine of material for meditation, for encouragement, and ultimately for a personal encounter with the Risen Lord.

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<sup>218</sup> Gaillardetz and Clifford, “Full, Conscious, Active Participation,” 5.

<sup>219</sup> Peter Kwasniewski, “In Defense of Side Altars,” at New Liturgical Movement (27 January 2020), at <http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2020/01/in-defense-of-side-altars.html#.YDv9D0jYrc>, quoting Enrico Finotti, accessed Feb. 28.

<sup>220</sup> For a good contemporary discussion of the different senses of Scripture, see John Baptist Ku, “Reading the Bible and the Senses of Sacred Scripture” in Nicanor Austriaco, James Brent, Thomas Davenport, and John Baptist Ku, *Thomistic Evolution: A Catholic Approach to Understanding Evolution in the Light of Faith* (Providence: Cluny Media, 2019), 89-94.

“Jesus used many parables of this kind, such as they could listen to easily, in preaching the word to them; to them he spoke only in parables, and made all plain to his disciples when they were alone (Mk. 4:33-34).” This short passage summarizes the attitude one ought to have in regard to the liturgy. Jesus reveals Himself in the liturgy in ways that are accessible to man’s fallen condition, which have a force of their own for drawing people to conversion and deeper intimacy with Him, just as Moses was drawn to the burning bush (Ex. 3:2-3). While man is on the journey of faith in this life, Jesus speaks to us through these liturgical parables, concretizing for us the lofty teachings contained in His New Law. Yet, it is precisely when one is alone with Him, in the intimacy of prayer and meditation, that He makes known “the depth of [His] riches and wisdom and knowledge” which are incomprehensible to those without faith (Rom. 11:33, NAB). Through this revelation, He invites man to unite with the other members of the Church in communal worship so that they might, as the Church prays in her liturgy, do all things “through Him, with Him, and in Him,” offering to the Father, “from whom and in whom and for whom are all things (Rom. 11:36, NAB)”, through the Spirit, glory and honor forever.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Cf. Roman Canon

## **Conclusion: Jesus's Continued Presence in the Church**

“Behold, I am with you always...(Matt. 28:20)”

### *Reclaiming the Sacred*

Jesus, as the Divine Physician, knows perfectly both the malady which afflicts mankind, and the perfect remedy. Mankind had sinned through inordinate desire for and attachment to earthly things, and so Our Lord took on human flesh, entering into the world of the senses. Christ, the “image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15),” purified sensible things, even human nature, making them capable of being receptors and conduits of grace. In addition, sensible things now become symbols of the mysteries of the life of Christ, of His teaching, and of the events of salvation history.

As I have attempted to show throughout this thesis, the usage of sensible things as these conduits and symbols is regulated through Law and parables. In giving the Law to Moses, God recalled the events of Israel's past, identifying Himself as the God “your father worshipped, the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6).” God instituted a covenant with Israel, to recall to them His promises to these three great patriarchs, as well as their liberation from the land of Egypt. Yet, the ceremonies instituted as part of this covenant also began preparing the Israelites for the future coming of Christ. As “a people set apart for its own God, chosen by its own God, out of all the nations on the earth (Deut. 7:6),” the sacraments of the Old Law attempted to inculcate to the people that their worship ought to reflect their status as not of this world.

Yet the people would not listen, and as such God sent them prophets to remind them of their sacred status as a people, often accompanied by mighty signs and prophecy. These prophetic signs served as parables, communicating to the people the essence of what God had

invited them to do in the Law; to live as a people holy, set apart, and to offer Him right worship. This great prophetic chain culminates in the arrival of John the Baptist, who preceded Christ in His preaching of repentance and baptism.

Christ Himself came, bringing the New Law of grace, and teaching by parables. His parables recalled to the people the essence of the New Law, namely love of God and love of neighbor. These two commandments also were present in the Old Law, but became lost, buried under the suffocation of pharisaic legalism. These two great commands found their perfect fulfillment in the events of Christ Passion, particularly His Last Supper and Crucifixion. Jesus confesses to His Apostles that “I have longed and longed to share this Paschal meal with you before my Passion (Lk. 22:15).” In His last hours, He institutes the Sacrament of Love, the Holy Eucharist. This great sacrament is both a sign of His impending crucifixion and its fruit, continuing His presence substantially among humanity. The following day He would reveal to the world the full import of not only His actions, but of the whole of salvation history, which is nothing but an act of love by God for humanity.

After confirming His work on earth by His Resurrection and Ascension, Christ manifests and strengthens His Church through the Holy Spirit. In His Church, Christ remains present. He remains present substantially in the Eucharist, and in the Mass and the other sacraments by knowledge and power. His law is given to the Church through the Deposit of Faith, and explicated in ever deeper and more profound ways by the Magisterium. Through the sacraments, Christ gives grace to His people and draws them into meditation on His life, His law, the very mysteries of salvation history.

Yet Christ, through the Holy Spirit, has inspired His Church to develop a liturgy fitting to communicate these truths, through liturgical parables. These parables lead the faithful to greater faith and charity, and immerse them in the mystery of Christ. What is important, however, is not simply the parables themselves, but how they are celebrated. Jesus is both fully God and fully man, both mysterious and yet incarnate. In the same way, our Christian life, as members of Christ's Body (See, for example, 1 Cor. 12:27 and Eph. 5:30) is both mysterious and incarnational. Thus, I have argued it is fitting that the liturgy ought to reflect this dual nature of Christ life. On the one hand, the liturgy is a mystery, something which ought to be studied, internalized, experienced in faith, but which is ultimately comprehensible only in the light of the Beatific Vision. It is also incarnational, both in its development from the early centers connected with the life of Christ, but also in its tangibility, through which the faithful are led to deeper knowledge and contemplation of the mystery.

It is only through recovering this sense of the sacred, of recognizing the liturgy as a gift from God, as His continued parable to His people, as a mystery, that the Church will be able to be "cut to the heart (Acts 2:37)," to be immersed in the "mystery, hidden from the ages, and the peoples, which has now been manifested to His holy ones (Col. 1:26, my translation from the Vulgate)." Then "we [shall have] sight of His glory, glory such as belongs to the Father's only begotten Son, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14)."



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