

**THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD**  
or  
**Notes on the relation between the grace of God  
and the free will of man**

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## PREAMBLE

1. God is almighty. This is what we believe, this is what we proclaim each time we commemorate the Victory of Christ over death: *I believe in God, the Father almighty.* (Credo). Now, it is undeniable – God himself wanted it to be so – that man, any man or woman, remains entirely free with respect to divine omnipotence. If man accepts the salvation that is offered to him by God, the omnipotence of divine grace is successfully released into the soul of this man or woman, in order to transform him or her into a new creature, a son or daughter of the Father, an adopted child of God for all eternity. On the other hand, if man refuses the salvation that God offers him, the omnipotence of divine grace is held in check by the fundamental freedom of the creature God had made in his image and likeness.

The grace of God and the free will of man meet in order to unite themselves together or to be repelled from each other, and at this meeting there is something absolutely unique at stake for man: his eternal salvation. This relation between the grace of God and the free will of man is thus a relation of the highest importance. What is more, this relation is imbued with the highest of all the mysteries of creation: the encounter of the omnipotence of divine grace and the free will of man, an encounter in which divine omnipotence can be thwarted by the free will of a simple creature: man.

There is no reason to ask if, whether in the sense of success or in that of failure, this is possible: this relation is an absolute reality, but a reality which surpasses us, for it is of the order of mystery. Thanks to divine omnipotence, man can be saved. In spite of divine omnipotence, man can lose and damn himself. This is the Mystery, a mystery which we will try to encompass, in order to understand as much of it as we can, while abandoning to the Wisdom of God everything that will forever belong to the Being who, alone, is fully self-sufficient.

Science knows only the general: that is, the certain knowledge of a law or rule is never based upon a single and unique particular case. But this is precisely what occurs in the relation between divine grace and the free will of man: each relation of this kind is a personal and particular relation between God and the man or woman to whom the grace of salvation is offered. Thus, a priori, it would not be possible to establish the law which governs this relation between God and man.

Nevertheless, there is a reality called the *Body of Christ* which unites within it, in a manner that is absolutely perfect and one, all the elect of God, whoever they may be:

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this reality is the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Similarly, according to this same relation of the *Body of Christ*, there is a reality which, in the order of divine grace, transcends everything: it is the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, the sacrament of he who is the very author of grace. Consequently, to study the relation between divine grace and the free will of man, it is enough for us to consider the relation between the Church, represented by the person of the priest, and the Eucharist, the grace of graces.

**A**n objection may arise: the Eucharist is the sacrament of salvation par excellence; how then can one see in this sacrament an explanation of the rejection of the grace of God by man, who, in this way, damns himself? The answer is simple, and unique: it is in the liturgical rite of the breaking of the bread that we can perfectly study the relation between divine grace and the free will of man. For, in the breaking of the bread, a rite performed by the priest before communion, man manifests a certain domination over God, in Christ, a domination which leads to salvation through the obedience of faith, or to perdition through impurity and sacrilege.

**A** final objection that might be made is that the rite of the breaking of the bread is a simple material, or corporeal, action, and thus it cannot serve as proof of a purely spiritual relation such as that which exists between the grace of God and the freedom of man. The answer to this objection lies in man himself: man is a being in whom matter and spirit, in accordance with the plan of God, are absolutely inseparable. Only death can separate the soul from the body of a man or woman. Now, death is not relevant to a discussion on grace and free will: for death is that ultimate point before which – during terrestrial life – God unceasingly invites man to freely accept his almighty grace.

**W**hat is the breaking of the bread? How can this liturgical rite guide us in the analysis of the interaction between the grace of God and the freedom of man? Does the breaking of the bread give us an adequate means through which we may understand, insofar as it is possible, how the gift of divine grace is freely received by man? We shall answer all these questions in this study, the very one we have begun today...

## INTRODUCTION

### THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

2. What is *the breaking of the bread*? This expression is dear to Saint Luke: «Cognoverunt eum in fractione panis.» *They recognized him in the breaking of the bread.* (Lk. 24:35: Meeting with the disciples of Emmaus – See also: Acts. 2:42, 46; 20:11) This rite of the fraction is found in all the accounts of the institution of the Eucharist (Mt. 26:26 – Mk. 14:22 – Lk. 22:19 – 1 Cor. 11:24). This rite originates from a Jewish custom: *The Jews did not slice their bread, they broke it. Following this custom, Our Lord, at the Last Supper, at the same time as he consecrated the bread, he broke it in order to distribute it among his Apostles. He commanded them to also break it, in remembrance of him.* (Dom Vandeur, *The Holy Mass*, p. 259) So it seems that the expression *breaking of the bread* is the oldest name for – and that which best characterizes – the action performed by Christ at the Last Supper, an action which he ordered to be done again: *Do this in remembrance of me.* (1 Cor. 11:24)

Not wanting to divinize only a certain thing (the bread, as well as the wine) by transforming it into his Body (and his Blood), Christ also wanted to divinize a gesture, an action (the breaking) performed upon that thing (the bread); a gesture which was already, in Jewish customs, a quasi-ritual one. The breaking of the bread is thus an important rite in the liturgy of the Eucharist, and therefore, it is an action that is truly determinant for the entire life of the Church herself. We shall see, among other things, what Saint Thomas Aquinas thinks concerning the breaking of the bread. As elsewhere, we shall first quote the Latin text that Saint Thomas wrote, by his own hand, in the 13th century. The English translation will then follow. The thought of this great Doctor of the Church will be extremely useful to us as we begin our study of grace and free will. When it is almost complete, after many reflections and reasonings, we shall present, as a corollary, the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas on the very Mystery of the Church, a corollary which will have as its title: *The Sacrament of the Church in Saint Thomas Aquinas.*

3. Is the breaking of the bread an essential element of the Eucharistic celebration? No, but it has its importance in the liturgical rite and Saint Thomas provides us with the reason for this: «Fractio hostiae consecratae, et quod una sola pars mittatur in calicem, respicit corpus mysticum; sicut admixtio quae significat populum, et ideo horum praetermissio non facit imperfectionem sacrificii, ut propter hoc sit necesse

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aliquid reiterare circa celebrationem hujus sacramenti.» *The breaking of the consecrated host, and the fact that only part of the host is placed in the chalice, are things that relate to the Mystical Body (of Christ); just as the addition of water (to the wine) signifies the people (of God); and this is why the omission of these things does not render the sacrifice imperfect and require the repetition of any part of the celebration of this sacrament.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 83, a. 6, ad 6)

From this text, we can see that the breaking of the bread relates to the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. Let us also note what follows:

- by the consecration, the sacrifice is already accomplished: «non facit imperfectionem sacrificii»;
- the fraction of the host is of the order of the sign: «sicut admixtio quae significat populum»;
- the expression «celebrationem hujus sacramenti» necessarily includes both the consecration and the communion of the priest: «Perfectio hujus sacramenti non est in usu fidelium, sed in consecratione materiae: et ideo nihil derogat perfectioni hujus sacramenti, si populus sumat corpus sine sanguine, dummodo sacerdos consecrans sumat utrumque.» *The perfection of this sacrament does not consist in its use by the faithful, but in the consecration of the matter; and this is why the perfection of this sacrament is in no way corrupted when the people (of God) take the body without the blood, given that the consecrating priest receives both.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 80, a. 12, ad 2)

4. Let us see what else Saint Thomas says about the breaking of the bread.

«Fractio hostiae tria significat:

- primum quidem ipsam divisionem corporis Christi, quae facta est in passione;
- secundo distinctionem corporis mystici secundum diversos status;
- tertio distributionem gratiarum procedentium ex passione Christi.»

*The breaking of the host signifies three things:*

- first, the very division of the Body of Christ, which took place during the Passion;
  - second, the distinction of the Mystical Body (of Christ) according to its diverse states;
  - third, the distribution of the graces obtained in virtue of the Passion of Christ.
- (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 83, a. 5, ad 7)

5. Let us now compare this last text to that which Saint Thomas placed at the very beginning of his treatise on the Eucharist (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 73, a. 4), where he answers the question: «Utrum convenienter hoc sacramentum pluribus nominibus nominetur?» *Is it suitable to call this sacrament by various names?*

«Respondeo dicendum, quod hoc sacramentum habet triplicem significationem:

- unam quidem respectu praeteriti, in quantum scilicet est commemorativum Dominicae passionis, quae fuit verum sacrificium, ut supra dictum est (q. 48, art. 3); et secundum hoc nominatur sacrificium;
- aliam autem significationem habet respectu rei praesentis, scilicet ecclesisticae



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unitatis, cui homines aggregantur per hoc sacramentum; et secundum hoc nominatur communio, vel synaxis (Greek); (...)

– tertiam significationem habet respectu futuri, in quantum scilicet hoc sacramentum est praefigurativum fruitionis Dei, quae erit in patria; et secundum hoc dicitur viaticum, quia hic praebet nobis viam illuc perveniendi (...)

*I reply by saying that this sacrament has a triple signification:*

– first, with respect to the past, inasmuch as this sacrament commemorates the Passion of the Lord, which was a true sacrifice, as has already been said (q. 48, art. 3); and in this sense, this sacrament is called sacrifice;

– the second, with respect to the present and actual reality, that is to say, ecclesiastical unity, to which men are joined by this sacrament; and in this sense, this sacrament is called communion, or synaxis (...);

– the third, with respect to the future, inasmuch as this sacrament prefigures the enjoyment of God, which will take place in heaven; and in this sense, this sacrament is called viaticum, because it obtains for us the way to go to heaven...

6. One can thus easily see that the rite or gesture of the breaking of the bread realizes, simultaneously and concretely, though in a significative manner (it is of the order of the sign), the three fundamental realities of the Eucharist. The breaking of the bread is central in the rite of the sacrament, as testify the accounts of the Evangelists: «Et accepto pane gratias egit, et fregit, et dedit eis...» *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them...* (Lk. 22:19) The fraction takes place between the consecration and the communion: the fraction is the act of the Church, united by the Holy Spirit, an act accomplished in a present time understood as coming between, on the one hand, a moment of the past, that of the consecration (which rendered present a past act, that of the Passion of Christ), and on the other hand, a moment of the future, that of communion (which anticipates in the present the future event of eternal salvation in Jesus Christ).

7. From what has come before, we can easily put forward the assertion that the breaking of the bread is the sacramental sign of the epiclesis: the gesture of the fraction manifests in the sacramental sign what celebrant has just said in the prayer of the epiclesis, invoking the Holy Spirit, after the consecration, in order that the faithful might fruitfully receive (the principal fruit being unity) the Body and the Blood of Christ. This gesture of the fraction is not essential, as Saint Thomas says: what is essential is the prayer of the epiclesis itself. Now, this rite of the fraction is important because it intimately links the sacrament itself with the prayer of the Church; so it seems that this rite cannot licitly be omitted, just like the mixing of the water with the wine at the offertory. (see no. 3, the quotation of Saint Thomas: «sicut admixtio...»)

8. This relation between the epiclesis and the breaking of the bread is attested to by several ancient liturgies, especially Western ones (Gallican and Mozarabic), as has been established by Dom Cagin: *One finds in antiphonaries, in the Mass for Christmas Day, or in that of the Epiphany, or at Easter, or Pentecost, an antiphon under the rubric In fractione or Dum frangitur corpus or Ad Corpus Domini sumendum, etc., which is nothing other than an epiclesis, as Dom Cagin recognized, and which must be noted here, for this antiphon is found especially in the manuscripts of Italy... Here is the text in question:*

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Emitte angelum tuum Domine,  
Et dignare sanctificando mundare corda et corpora nostra ad percipiendum  
Corpus et sanguinem tuum,  
Nos frangimus, Domine.  
Tu dignare benedicere,  
Ut immaculatis manibus illud tractemus.  
O quam beatus venter ille qui Christum meruit portare.  
O quam pretiosa gemma et margarita,  
Quam lucis mundi illustrat gratia,  
O quam beati pedes illi qui Christum meruerunt sustinere,  
Cui angeli et archangeli offerunt munera,  
Sempiterno et excelso regi, alleluia.

*Send us your angel, Lord,  
and deign to purify and sanctify our hearts and bodies for the reception  
of your Body and Blood,  
which we break, Lord.  
Deign to give us your blessing,  
so that we might touch it with immaculate hands.  
O how happy is the womb that deserved to bear Christ,  
o how precious is that jewel, that pearl,  
which the grace of the light of the world enlightens,  
O how happy are the feet that deserved to bear Christ,  
He to whom the angels and archangels offered gifts,  
that eternal and most high King, alleluia.*

*Dom Cagin also demonstrates, in this passage and elsewhere in his work, that the angelus referred to in the epiclesis Emitte, and in several other formulas, beginning with the Roman formula Supplices te (...) jube haec perferri per manus sancti angeli tui, is nothing other than a designation of the Holy Spirit. (Te Deum, p. 221 – Musical Paleography, vol. V, p. 90) (Dom Fernand Cabrol, in Dictionary of Christian Archaeology and of Liturgy, Article EPICLESIS, Columns 166 and 167)*

9. As we have already seen, Saint Thomas spoke to us about the breaking of the bread with perspicacity, but one may find it regrettable that he did not, at the same time, discuss the epiclesis, whether it be ante-consecratory or post-consecratory. Certain analysts have already noted this lacuna: *This question, in the terms in which it poses itself to our mind, was unknown to him. Therefore he was content to describe the patristic doctrines of the Eucharistic virtue of the Holy Spirit, to affirm its conciliation with the effectiveness of the words of Christ, without insisting on anything more and without seeking to provide fuller explanations. When one reads the few lines incidentally devoted by the Angelic Doctor to this dogmatic proposition of tradition, one deeply regrets that the prince of theological speculation did not apply his genius to the development of this traditional data. He would not have failed to throw a great light upon the entire question.* (S. Salaville, in *Dictionary of Catholic Theology*, Article EPICLESIS, Columns 271 and 272)

10. So let us try to develop the thought of the Holy Doctor a little. In no. 3, we quoted this sentence: «perfectio hujus sacramenti non est in usu fidelium, sed in consecratione materiae.» *The perfection of this sacrament does not consist in its use*

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*by the faithful, but in the consecration of the matter.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 80, a. 12, ad 2) The commentators of Saint Thomas concluded from this that, for him, the essence of the Eucharistic celebration is the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. But, elsewhere in the Summa Theologica, Saint Thomas teaches us that, if the consecration confers a perfection to the sacrament of the Eucharist, the use of this same sacrament – that is, Eucharistic communion – brings a greater (since it is total) perfection to the sacrament: «Ad quamdam perfectionem sacramenti pertinet materiae consecratae usus, sicut operatio non est prima, sed secunda perfectio rei, ideo per omnia ista verba (*Accipite, et comedite*) exprimitur tota perfectio hujus sacramenti.» *The use of the consecrated matter confers a certain perfection on this sacrament, just as the activity (of a thing) is not the first, but rather the second perfection of that thing; this is why these words (Take and eat – cf. Mt. 26:26) express all of the perfection of this sacrament.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 78, a. 1, ad 2)

11. Thus we have a first perfection: consecration; and a second perfection: communion. Now, a little further on, Saint Thomas teaches us that:

«duplex est res hujus sacramenti (...):

- una quidem, quae est significata, et contenta, scilicet ipse Christus;
- alia autem est significata, et non contenta, scilicet corpus Christi mysticum, quod est societas sanctorum.

Quicumque ergo sacramentum sumit, ex hoc ipso significat se esse Christo unitum, et membris ejus incorporatum; quod quidem fit per fidem formatam.»

*The reality of this sacrament is twofold (...):*

- one, which is signified and contained (in the sacrament), is Christ himself;
- the other is signified and not contained (in the sacrament); it is the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the society of saints.

*So whoever takes (eats) the sacrament signifies by that very fact that he is united to Christ and that he is a member of Christ; this takes place through informed faith.*

(Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 80, a. 4, corp.)

(Note: informed faith is faith in its union with charity, that is, faith as it is when it receives its *form*, and thence its life, from charity. It is faith and charity, in a common hope, which make a man or woman a member of the Mystical Body of Christ.)

Moreover, Saint Thomas specifies that the priest communicates of the Blood of Christ (and thus also of the Body of Christ, the Body and Blood forming one sacrament) in the name of all the faithful: «Sacerdos in persona omnium sanguinem offert, et sumit.» *The priest offers and takes (drinks) the blood (and eats the body) in the name of all.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 80, a.12, ad 3)

12. Thus it seems that the thought of the Holy Doctor must be understood as follows:

- the first perfection of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the realization of the sacramental Body of Christ under the species of the bread and wine at the moment of the consecration;
- the second perfection of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the realization of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, at the moment of the communion of the priest

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(by *realization*, one must understand here, in both a qualitative and quantitative way, the growth or the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ).

13. For Saint Thomas, the Mass certainly forms a whole; but in this whole, he notes these two principal and essential moments: the consecration of the bread and wine, and the communion of the celebrant. Besides, did he not compose this admirable office of the Blessed Sacrament, in which one reads: «O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur: recolitur memoria passionis ejus: mens impletur gratia: et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur, alleluia.» *O sacred banquet in which Christ is eaten: in which the memory of his passion is celebrated, the soul is filled with grace, and the pledge of future glory is given to us, alleluia.* (Magnificat Antiphon)?

14. To study the liturgical rite of the breaking of the bread, as we are now doing, is to study the epiclesis, of which the breaking of the bread is the sacramental sign. We are now truly at the heart of the problem of the relation between the grace of God and the free will of man. For, to seek to understand the action of the epiclesis within the Eucharistic celebration is to try to explain the unity that exists between the sacramental action, which is an action of God, and the prayer of epiclesis, which is an action of man. Certain texts by Saint Thomas Aquinas, like those we quoted earlier, will be quite useful to us. But could Saint Thomas have suspected the importance of the epiclesis in the celebration of the Eucharist? Probably not. And here is the reason.

15. The epiclesis is a prayer of the Church recited by the celebrant, a bishop or priest. Now, this prayer has importance and effectiveness only because at Mass, when the priest prays, Mary prays with him: *The mystery of the union of Mary Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer continues. The Priest thus communicates of the crucified Jesus's sentiments for Mary and of Mary's sentiments for the crucified Jesus, he makes the love of Christ for Mary his own, and he receives the love of Mary for Christ, who is in him. Finally, and above all, in his sacerdotal prayer, he presents the offering of the Co-Redemptrix as she unites herself to the Redeemer in the supreme act of sacrifice.* (R.P. Philippe, O.P., *The Blessed Virgin and the Priesthood*, p. 63) *The prayer of Mary is supremely effective. It is the prayer of a simple creature, but a creature who is the Queen of the universe and Queen of all men; and it is the prayer of a creature who truly merited in advance all that she asks of God.* (ibid, p. 86)

16. But one must note here that only the prayer of Mary is thus supremely effective during the Eucharistic celebration, for only Mary is the Immaculate Conception, and her privilege is unique. Indeed, the Immaculate Conception of Mary confers upon her the power to become the Mother of Christ and the Mother of God, and thus she also becomes the Wife of the Holy Spirit, that is, almighty in the Almighty.

17. Let us take another look at what we have just said, with the addition of a few supportive texts. On one hand, the prayer of Mary has effectiveness only because she is the Mother of God: *This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 62)

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18. On the other hand, the divine maternity of Mary finds its necessary and indispensable support in her Immaculate Conception: *Adorned from the first instant of her conception with the radiance of an entirely unique holiness, the Virgin of Nazareth is greeted, on God's command, by an angel messenger as full of grace (cf. Lk. 1:28), and to the heavenly messenger she replies: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word. (Lk. 1:38) Thus Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine Word, became the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under him and with him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption.* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Gentium Lumen*, no. 56)

19. Consequently, we see that the epiclesis has:

- for its remote foundation, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary;
- for its immediate foundation, the belief in the universal Mediation of the Mother of God.

20. Although the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, by Blessed Pope Pius IX, goes back to the year 1854, belief in this doctrine is not new. But, before its dogmatic definition, this doctrine had, in every age, both supporters and adversaries, including in the 13th century, the time of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Now, according to the commentators of Saint Thomas, the latter seems not to have firmly believed in the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Moreover, Saint Thomas says in his *Summa Theologica*: «Beata Virgo contraxit quidem originale peccatum, sed ab eo fuit mundata, antequam ex utero nasceretur.» *The Blessed Virgin did in fact contract original sin, but she was purified of it before her birth.* (Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q. 27, a. 2, ad 2) However, Saint Thomas can be excused for making this declaration, for he bases it on his too great regard of the dignity of Christ (if one may speak in this way) as he says at the beginning of the same article: «Si nunquam anima Beatae Virginis fuisset contagio originalis peccati inquinata, hoc derogaret dignitati Christi, secundum quam est universalis omnium Salvator.» *If the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never been attained by the contagion of original sin, it would have derogated from the dignity of Christ, a dignity which belongs to him due to his being the universal Savior of all [men].* (ibidem)

21. We do not wish to perform a complete analysis of the thought of the Holy Doctor on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, but let us note nonetheless that, in other writings, Saint Thomas seems favorable to the Immaculate Conception of Mary... The commentators of Saint Thomas and those who belong to his school do not agree on whether he was for or against the Immaculate Conception. In addition, it would be extremely interesting to study the thought of the theologians of the Thomist school and to compare their personal opinions on the questions of the essence of the Mass and of the Immaculate Conception.

22. In the same order of ideas, let us note that, according to the commentators, Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure think that the essence of the Mass resides in the consecration of the species of the bread and the wine. Now, still according to the commentators, both are against the Immaculate Conception of Mary. So it seems that these two questions are closely linked to each other. Moreover, how can one attribute a certain essential reality to the prayer of epiclesis and to Eucharistic

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communion, and how can one thus provide an adequate solution to the relation that exists between the grace of God and the free will of man, without requiring the intervention of the – mysterious – action of that absolutely unique being, Immaculate Mary?

23. Lastly, one may wonder how it can be that the Virgin Mary could have some part in a sacramental action – the Eucharistic celebration – when she is not a priest. But would not the privilege of her Immaculate Conception be the very foundation of her priesthood, a priesthood exercised through her divine Maternity ever since the Incarnation, conjointly with and in virtue of the unique priesthood of Christ? Her universal Mediation would then be the constant realization of her priesthood, a maternal priesthood, one that is intermediary between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful. Is she not at once both the Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church, Mediatrix between Christ and men?

24. The priesthood of Mary... We seem to have gotten quite far from the breaking of the bread! But not as far as it seems! Is it not Saint Luke who relates to us this central notion of the Eucharist, in his Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles? Now, tradition tells us that Saint Luke obtained much of his information from Mary herself, she who *kept all these things, pondering them in her heart*. (Lk. 2:19) Who could even imagine that Mary did not keep and ponder at length all that took place in the Cenacle at the Last Supper? And she certainly did not fail to inform Saint Luke about it.

25. Now, the three synoptic gospels do not say much concerning the Last Supper. They present it to us in a manner similar to that of scholastic theologians: the circumstances and state of the question, the matter and form of the sacrament, and little else. On the other hand, Saint John, the spiritual son of Mary (cf. Jn. 19:26), does not deem it necessary to report what the synoptic gospels tell us: of the sacrament itself, he says nothing, at least not in his account of the Last Supper; elsewhere, on the other hand, he has much to say on this subject (see, for example, Jn. 6:51–55).

26. Concerning the Last Supper, Saint John recounts the final discourse of Jesus to his disciples. Now, of what does Jesus speak? He sets forth to his disciples the entire plan of love of his Father, the Church, and the action of the Holy Spirit who would come after his departure – that is, after his death on the Cross and his Ascension into Heaven. But Jesus is not content with teaching. Jesus prays! He prays to his Father for the Church; he prays for the unity of all believers (cf. Jn. 17:20–26). This prayer forms the last part of his discourse.

27. So this is what Saint John told us concerning the Last Supper: the prayer of epiclesis! Or rather, this is what Mary had especially preserved and meditated upon in her Immaculate Heart! This is what she transmitted to Saint John, for it is this that reveals the entire mystery of the Eucharist, it is this that reveals all of her maternal action, in the economy of grace, the grace given to the men and women of the earth in her Son Jesus!

28. The prayer of epiclesis, the breaking of the bread, is a revelation! A revelation that leads to the Love who is God himself! So if we want to know and love Jesus, let

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us go to him through the *breaking of the bread*. Let us go to Jesus, through Mary, in the Holy Spirit, in order to render to the Father all honor and glory! «Cognoverunt eum in fractione panis.» *They recognized him in the breaking of the bread.* (Lk. 24:35)

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## Chapter I

### FIRST ANALYSIS

#### THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE LITURGY

29. In this first chapter devoted to the breaking of the bread, we will not develop the entire history of this liturgical rite which, as time went by, underwent numerous and multiple variations; we will simply content ourselves with saying what we think on this subject, to the extent that the gift of the Holy Spirit has allowed us to understand this. In sum, we shall expose, clearly and with the greatest possible rigor, the thought and the eternal plan of the Spirit of God with regard to this action of the breaking of the bread, not through the language of God himself, which does not belong to us, but rather through the intermediary of poor human words coined over the course of the centuries. So we shall begin by approaching the subject from the outside, by means of sensible realities: this will be an analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of the liturgy. Once that is done, we will then be able to attain the interior of things, their spiritual side, and all of their sublime profundity: this will be an analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of grace. But between the exterior and interior aspects of our subject matter, and in order to pass from one to the other, we shall develop our analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of man, for, according to the thought of Blaise Pascal, man is the creature that is in a state of mediocrity or mediation between the corporeal and the spiritual, a state outside of which he is never fully himself.

30. The breaking of the bread is a rite, that is, a ceremonial action, of the Eucharistic liturgy. It consists in breaking the bread which has just been consecrated into the Body of Christ with a view to the sacramental communion which follows. Although it does not appear to be so, at least at first sight, this liturgical action truly seems to be the greatest in significance and the richest in symbolism of all the ceremonies of the Mass. But as, over the course of the centuries, the rite of the breaking of the bread knew many variations in the way it was celebrated, it would be difficult or even impossible to distinguish what is the true significance of this liturgical action if we did not refer ourselves, as a sure and guaranteed starting point, to the liturgy of the Mass, as it was restored to its primitive purity at the request of the Second Council of the Vatican.

31. In the Eucharistic liturgy, as it is celebrated today, the breaking of the consecrated bread takes place during the singing of *Agnus Dei*: «*Sacerdos accipit hostiam, eamque super patenam frangit, et particulam immittit in calicem (...)* Interim

a choro et a populo cantatur vel dicitur *Agnus Dei*. » *The priest takes the host, breaks it over the paten, and places a small piece in the chalice (...) Meanwhile, the choir and congregation sings or recites Lamb of God.* (Missale Romanum, Institutio generalis, no. 113) This means that the priest's own action of breaking the host takes place simultaneously with the action of the faithful who sing or recite the invocation *Agnus Dei*. In other words, the rite of the breaking of the bread, accompanied by the chant *Agnus Dei*, highlights two conjoint and simultaneous actions: one, which is the action proper to the ministerial priesthood; and the other, which is the action proper to the common priesthood of the faithful. So we can say that, in this study on the breaking of the bread, our proper and central objective will be the consideration of the simultaneity and the conjunction which exists, in the celebration of the Eucharist, between the action of the ministerial priesthood and the action of the common priesthood of the faithful.

32. The breaking of the bread is the action proper to the priest, an action which consists in breaking, with the fingers, the consecrated Host into two or more fragments: «Celebrans (...) accipit hostiam inter pollicem et indicem dexteræ manus, et cum illis ac pollice et indice sinistrae manus eam super calicem tenens, reverenter frangit per medium.» *The celebrant takes the host between the thumb and index finger of the right hand, and, holding it thus, above the chalice, with the thumb and the index finger of the left hand, he respectfully breaks it through the middle.* (Missale Romanum, anno 1962, Ritus servandus in celebratione Missæ, Tit. X, no. 2) Conjointly and simultaneously with the action proper to the priest, the chant or invocation *Agnus Dei* is the action proper to the faithful: «Dum fractio panis et immixtio peraguntur, invocatio *Agnus Dei* a schola vel a cantore, populo respondente, de more cantatur, vel elata voce dicitur. Haec invocatio repeti potest quoties necesse est ad fractionem panis comitandam. Ultima vice concluditur verbis *dona nobis pacem*.» *During the breaking of the bread and the commingling, the Agnus Dei is as a rule sung by the choir or cantor with the congregation responding; otherwise it is recited aloud. This invocation may be repeated as often as necessary to accompany the breaking of the bread. The final reprise concludes with the words, grant us peace.* (Missale Romanum, Institutio generalis, no. 56, § e)

33. What must first be highlighted is that the priest carries out the rite of the breaking of the bread only after having completed the recitation of the Eucharistic Prayer and after this last has been ratified by the faithful taking part in the celebration. Now, one may say that the part of the Mass which extends from the *Amen* which ratifies the Eucharistic Prayer to the act of sacramental communion is nothing other than a prolongation or an extension of the Eucharistic Prayer: it is a development of the prayer of epiclesis which constitutes the center of the Eucharistic Prayer. By this very fact, all the prayers or invocations which follow the Eucharistic Prayer have the value of the epiclesis and can be assimilated to it. Thus, the invocation *Agnus Dei* can be regarded as the epiclesis proper to the faithful, objectively similar to the epiclesis of the priest, but recited by persons who are essentially different from the person of the priest, and carried out at a time completely distinct from the time in which the epiclesis of the priest is pronounced; so this is a practical realization of the following principle: *Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated.* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 10)

34. To what we have just said about the invocation *Agnus Dei*, one must also add that, as the epiclesis, insofar as it is a spiritual communion, is completed only through sacramental communion, the epiclesis of the priest, or the Eucharistic Prayer, though it is recited by the priest before the invocation *Agnus Dei* recited by the faithful, coincides in time with this same invocation *Agnus Dei*, if one considers the specific spiritual aspect of the prayer: there is here a conjunction and simultaneity between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful, since both find their common end in the act of Eucharistic communion which brings to a close the act of spiritual or epicletic communion. Moreover, the epicletic character of the invocation *Agnus Dei*, as well as the simultaneous and conjoint aspect of the relation between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of faithful, is set into greater relief by the breaking of the bread which takes place during the Mass «sine populo» *without the people*; indeed, it is the priest himself who then recites the invocation *Agnus Dei* while carrying out the rite of the fraction: «Dum dicit *Agnus Dei* cum ministro sacerdos frangit hostiam super patenam.» *While he says the Agnus Dei with the server, the priest breaks the eucharistic bread over the paten.* (Missale Romanum, Institutio generalis, no. 226)

35. The breaking of the bread, the action proper to the priest, is in a conjoint and simultaneous relation with the chant *Agnus Dei*, the action proper to the faithful. As the invocation or the chant *Agnus Dei* can be regarded as a true epiclesis in the full sense of the term, this is the same as saying that the intimate relation between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful is fully manifested in the relation that exists between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis. As the latter relation is not something new, but rather founded upon all liturgical tradition, it follows that all of the significance and symbolism of the breaking of the bread is in its relation to the epiclesis, and that, consequently, all of our research on the relation between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful can be reduced to the sole consideration of this proper and absolute relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis.

36. There is a relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis: the current liturgy testifies to this. But what is essential to note here is that all liturgical tradition is unanimous on this subject. As we have already said this in our Introduction (see no. 8), this relation between the epiclesis and the breaking of the bread is attested to by several ancient liturgies, especially Western ones (Gallican and Mozarabic), as has been established by Dom Cagin: *One finds in antiphonaries, in the Mass for Christmas Day, or in that of the Epiphany, or at Easter, or Pentecost, an antiphon under the rubric In fractione or Dum frangitur corpus or Ad Corpus Domini sumendum, etc., which is nothing other than an epiclesis, as Dom Cagin recognized, and which must be noted here, for this antiphon is found especially in the manuscripts of Italy... Dom Cagin also demonstrates, in this passage and elsewhere in his work, that the angelus referred to in the epiclesis Emitte, and in several other formulas, beginning with the Roman formula Supplices te (...) jube haec perferri per manus sancti angeli tui, is nothing other than a designation of the Holy Spirit.* (Te Deum, p. 221 – Musical Paleography, vol. V, p. 90) (Dom Fernand Cabrol, in *Dictionary of Christian Archaeology and of Liturgy*, Article EPICLESIS, Columns 166 and 167)

37. There is a conjoint and simultaneous relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis. Now, the specificity of the rite of the breaking of the bread lies intrinsically in the fact that the species of the bread, or the appearance of the sacrament of the Body of Christ, is broken: it consists in a certain destruction of the sacramental species. In addition, it is certain that every epiclesis, no matter which, relates to the two species of the sacrament of the Eucharist, namely the bread and the wine, and this in a way that is absolutely one and indissociable in virtue of the very notion of prayer, which is essentially simple and one because it is spiritual. As a typical example of an epiclesis, we shall cite Eucharistic Prayer no. 2 from the Roman Missal: «*Memores igitur mortis et resurrectionis ejus, tibi, Domine, panem vitae et calicem salutis offerimus, gratias agentes quia nos dignos habuisti astare coram te et tibi ministrare. Et supplices deprecamur ut Corporis et Sanguinis Christi participes a Spiritu Sancto congregemur in unum.*» *In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Father, this life-giving bread, this saving cup. We thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in the unity by the Holy Spirit.* Thus, if there is a relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, there must also necessarily exist a relation between the epiclesis and the other Eucharistic species (the wine) considered according to all of the specificity of the breaking of the bread: that is, a relation between the epiclesis and the species of the wine that is cut or even, in a certain way, denatured.

38. If there is a relation between the epiclesis and the species of the cut or denatured wine, there is, however, no rite of the Mass in which the priest, between the consecration and communion, carries out the denaturation of the consecrated wine in a way similar to that in which he breaks the consecrated bread in the rite of fraction. On the other hand, during the offertory, the deacon (acting on behalf of the priest), or the priest himself, adds a few drops of water to the wine before it is poured into the chalice: «*Ad offertorium (...) diaconus (...) infundit vinum et parum aquae in calicem.*» *At the presentation of the gifts,... the deacon... pours wine and a little water into the chalice.* (Missale Romanum, Institutio generalis, no. 133). Now, since wine is a liquid, only another liquid of the same polarity – that is, a liquid which mixes in a homogeneous manner with the first liquid – can cut and denature, or even destroy, the first liquid: and it is precisely so in the case of water with respect to wine. Thus, the admixture of water to the wine during the offertory of the Mass constitutes a rite whose specificity is perfectly identical to that of the rite of the breaking of the bread. By this very fact, because there is a conjoint and simultaneous relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, there exists parallel to this a conjoint and simultaneous relation between the mixture of water into the wine and the epiclesis.

39. Conforming ourselves to the liturgical usage and tradition of the Church, in which one communicates of the Body of Christ before communicating of the Blood of Christ, we deduced the existence of the relation between the wine cut with water and the epiclesis by basing ourselves on the existence of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis. By this very fact, it is absolutely clear that the existence of the rite in which the species of the wine is cut with water rests entirely upon the very existence of the rite of the breaking of the bread. As this latter rite goes back all the way to the Lord himself, and thus to the apostolic origins of the Church, it follows that the rite of the wine cut with water must be regarded as an

action which Christ the Lord himself performed during the institution of the Eucharist, and that this same rite has always been practiced in the Church in imitation of her Head: «In praeparatione donorum, ad altare afferuntur panis et vinum cum aqua, ea nempe elementa, quae Christus in manus suas accepit.» *In the preparation of the gifts, the bread and the wine with water are brought to the altar, that is, the same elements that Christ used.* (Missale Romanum, Institutio generalis, no. 48)

40. Out of all the ancient documents which report the existence of the rite of the wine cut with water, let us quote the following passage of Saint Justin: *There is brought to he who presides over the assembly of the brethren some bread and a cup of wine mixed with water.* (Apology LXV, 3; in Louis Pautigny, *Justin*, pp. 138–139) Parallel to Saint Justin, certain ancient anaphoras explicitly cite the example of the Lord himself: *Saint Justin testifies to the use of water in the Eucharist in the second century. This testimony is corroborated by that of certain anaphoras which specify, in the account of the Institution: He mixed water into the wine... This tradition concerning the Last Supper of the Lord forms the basis for the quasi-universal usage.* (A. G. Martimort, «L'Église en prière» *The Church in Prayer*, p. 382, 1965 edition)

41. Liturgically, within the framework of the theology of the liturgy, the existence of the rite of adding water to the wine rests entirely, though spiritually, upon the existence of the rite of the breaking of the bread (see no. 39). Now, still liturgically, the existence of the latter rite rests entirely, though materially, or corporeally, upon the existence of the first: in the celebration of the liturgy of the Mass, the mixture of water into the wine precedes in time the breaking of the bread. Thus, liturgically speaking, one must think and believe without hesitation that the rite of the breaking of the bread, and that of the mixture of water into the wine, exist together and indissociably, in a way that is both corporeal and spiritual, that is, when these two rites are considered in their conjoint and simultaneous relation to the prayer of epiclesis. Therefore, one absolutely cannot deny that the sacrament of the Eucharist, within the framework of the theology of the liturgy, in the proper context of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis – this breaking of the bread being but one, liturgically speaking, with the mixture of water into the wine – the sacrament of the Eucharist, as we were saying, considered in an epicletic way, that is, considered as communion, is not only spiritual, as is every sacrament, but is also truly corporeal, in the material reality of the species of the bread and wine. This is what we shall retain from our first analysis.



## SECOND ANALYSIS

### THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD IN THE THEOLOGY OF MAN

42. Within the framework of the theology of the liturgy, we have shown that there is a conjoint and simultaneous relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis. Now, on the one hand, though the breaking of the bread could be materially carried out by a machine like that which makes hosts by cutting up bread, the breaking of the bread is, however, an action consciously carried out by the priest, that is, an act commanded by the will, dependent upon the intellect, or in other words it is a human act. In addition, the epiclesis, although it is also an action completely specific to the angelic creatures who, by means of prayer, lift up to God all of their being, which is their spirit, the epiclesis is here nevertheless an action proper to man, and is thus, like the breaking of the bread, truly a human act; for the epiclesis is, in the celebration of the Eucharist, a vocal prayer accomplished by both the spirit and the body of man. Consequently, the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis necessarily lies within the scope of the theology of man considered in his fullness, that is, considered always, and in an indissociable manner, according to his body and his soul, and thus, according to his mediocrity, or his intermediate position in all of *creation* (Mk. 16:15): this will be the topic of this second analysis.

43. The breaking of the bread, as a human action, consists in breaking, with the fingers, the consecrated Host, the Body of Christ (see no. 32). In this sense, the rite or liturgical action of the breaking of the bread does not differ from the act of Eucharistic communion, an act in which the consecrated Bread is first crushed by the teeth of the communicant before being digested and completely destroyed by the gastric juice in the stomach. In other words, in the act of Eucharistic communion, the action of the breaking of the bread achieves its absolute fullness in the total and complete destruction of the sacrament itself. But, as the epiclesis is a prayer, and as a prayer is nothing other than the privileged expression of the virtue of hope, the epiclesis, considered as a human action, also finds its absolute fullness in the act of Eucharistic communion, which is not a communion in hope, that is, an epiclesis, but rather a communion in reality, in the full sense of the term. Thus, both the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis find their absolute fullness in the act of Eucharistic communion. Now, as the Eucharist truly seems to be a temporal and material food similar to that which men eat at their meals; and as it is necessary to think and believe that the sacramental species, of the corporeal order, are an essential part of the sacrament of the Eucharist considered as communion (see no. 41); one must

necessarily regard the act of Eucharistic communion as a vital and nutritive act. By this very fact, it is an act which necessarily concerns the whole man, that is, both his body and his soul or spirit. It follows that, as the breaking of the bread is an action which is, intrinsically, corporeal and material, and as the epiclesis is an action which is, intrinsically, spiritual and vital; we can say that, in the very act of Eucharistic communion, the action of the body is properly the realization in fullness of the action of the breaking of the bread; and that the action of the soul or spirit is properly the realization in fullness of the action of the epiclesis. Lastly, since, in a nutritive act, the body and the soul or spirit of man are united by the simple principle of life; and since the body of man is the external element of this being, as opposed to his soul or spirit, which is the internal element of this same being; it is clear that the proper action of the breaking of the bread is nothing other than the external and corporeal manifestation of the proper action of the epiclesis considered in its spiritual and interior reality: the breaking of the bread can thus justifiably be considered as the sacramental sign of the epiclesis, that is, as the manifestation of the epiclesis in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

44. In the act of Eucharistic communion, the breaking of the bread is the action of the body of the man who communicates, and the epiclesis is the action of the soul or spirit of this same man. Now, in any human act – and such is the case here – the intention of the subject who performs this act, that is, the spiritual action of the subject, is always first with respect to the material act as such, which is properly the corporeal action of the subject. It follows that, in the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, the latter must be considered to be the action which explains the former – the breaking of the bread – and gives it all its meaning. Thus, after having exposed and described, in our first analysis, the typically material or corporeal action of the breaking of the bread, in which it is but one with the mixture of water into the wine, we shall study, in this second analysis, the properly spiritual action of the epiclesis, not in itself as we shall do in our third analysis, but rather in its relation to the action of the breaking of the bread, and this, in order to be able to establish with certainty and determine with precision in what consists all of the sense and significance of this same action of breaking the bread. In short, in this second analysis, we begin with the epiclesis: this will provide us with the specific sense of the liturgical rite of the breaking of the bread. Now, the epiclesis is a prayer, that is, a properly spiritual action through which man addresses himself to God and freely speaks to him in a familiar manner, as one speaks to a friend. Thus it consists in the expression of a spiritual movement of the soul towards God: on the one hand it is an entirely free movement, and, by this very fact, one that engages the will of man; and on the other hand it is an absolutely intellectual movement, since any word is the fruit of the human intellect in which it is conceived. Consequently, the epiclesis can be called the spiritual expression of a movement of the entire human person towards God. But spiritual communion in the form of the epiclesis is, intrinsically, a sacramental communion in hope, a preparation for Eucharistic communion. Thus, the epiclesis is nothing other than the spiritual expression of a movement which prepares the human person for sacramental communion. Lastly, in virtue of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis within the framework of Eucharistic communion, it follows that the action of the breaking of the bread is itself also an action preparatory to Eucharistic communion: the breaking of the bread is the corporeal expression of a movement of the human person towards God present in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Now, as Eucharistic communion requires



corporeal contact between the Eucharist and the human person who communicates, and as this corporeal contact has already taken place during the breaking of the bread, this same corporeal action of the breaking of the bread is not, intrinsically, the corporeal expression of the movement of the human person towards the Eucharist, but rather the full and entire result of this same movement. So, it is properly the action which, for the human person, consists in placing the hand upon the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is the corporeal expression of the movement of the human person towards God who is present, a movement manifested spiritually by the prayer of epiclesis. It is this movement which the Lord proclaimed in the following way: *I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger.* (Jn. 6:35)

45. The prayer of epiclesis is the spiritual expression of a movement of the human person going to God present in the Eucharist. Now, on one hand, the epiclesis, as a spiritual communion in the form of prayer, that is, as a communion in hope, and not in reality, is, intrinsically, imperfect if one does not consider it in the act of Eucharistic communion itself: the movement of the human person towards God lacks perfection if this same human person does not achieve his goal, which is God. In addition, as we study the epiclesis in order to understand the meaning of the action of the breaking of the bread, we must in the same way consider the epiclesis within the framework of Eucharistic communion, which realizes in perfection the act of the breaking of the bread, and not solely as the explanation of the gestures of the human person who places his hands upon the Eucharist in order to take it and break it, as we have just seen (no. 44). Consequently, to fully explain the significance of the act of the breaking of the bread, it is in the act of Eucharistic communion that we must develop our analysis of the prayer of epiclesis: for us it is a question of considering the action of the prayer of a human person who communicates sacramentally of the Eucharist. Now, in this precise act of Eucharistic communion, the human person cannot fail to be conscious of the fact that the Eucharist which he eats or drinks is, to all appearances, true food and true drink, temporal and perishable, and this, in a way that is absolutely full and entire, in virtue of the principle of life which governs the act of eating which takes place here. By this very fact, the human person who communicates of the Eucharist cannot be naturally conscious of the sacramental presence of God, and thus, this same human person can necessarily be conscious of this presence of God only by means of a supernatural virtue. As faith is the proper virtue by which man knows any truth that exceeds his intellect, that is, the virtue which makes it possible for man to understand any supernatural truth (cf. Isaiah 7:9 according to the LXX: *If you do not believe, you will not understand*), thus, the spiritual movement of the human person who goes to the Eucharist is an action which is realized in faith and through faith, as the Lord himself confirms when he says: *I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.* (Jn. 6:35) This enables us to say that, in the spiritual movement of the human person towards the God of the Eucharist, a movement that is considered in its result, which is Eucharistic communion, there necessarily exists a contact of the same order as this movement, that is, a spiritual contact, a contact that is properly the supernatural virtue of faith, and which, consequently, allows the supernatural union of God and the human person. Consequently, in virtue of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, we can come to the conclusion that the action of the breaking of the bread is, by mode of contact and by means of the sense of touch acting at the ends of the fingers of the hand, the corporeal expression of the spiritual action of faith, through

the intermediary of which the human person, who, by means of the prayer of epiclesis, accomplishes his spiritual movement towards God, brings into contact with the divinity the cutting edge of his soul or spirit, that is, the very place where this same virtue or spiritual contact of faith resides.

46. In our analysis of the prayer of epiclesis, faith in the presence of God in the Eucharist seems to us to possess a properly spiritual aspect in the epiclesis itself, and a properly corporeal aspect in the act of the breaking of the bread. This means that faith absolutely engages all of the human person, body and soul. Consequently, the object of faith, in this case the revelation of the fact that God is truly present in the Eucharist, necessarily comes from outside the person who believes: this object of faith is transmitted to the spirit or soul of this same person through the intermediary of his body, which is provided with various senses and organs. By this very fact, this object of faith is by no means an internal production of the human spirit, by which the presence of God in the Eucharist would be purely subjective and determined by the person who believes; but, on the contrary, we are dealing here with an application of the principle stated by Saint Paul: *faith comes from preaching*. (Rm. 10:17) Now, in the Eucharistic celebration, this object of faith consists specifically in the words pronounced by the priest «in persona Christi» in the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ: *This is my Body... This is my Blood...* From this and from what has already been said, we can affirm that the movement of the human person who goes to the Eucharist in and through faith comprises, intrinsically, two actions, distinct and separate in time: the first, which is accomplished during the consecration, consists in hearing, by mode of intellect and by means of the virtue of faith, the revelation and, by this very fact, the realization of the presence of God in the Eucharist; the second, which is accomplished during Eucharistic communion, consists in uniting oneself with the God of the Eucharist, by mode of will and by means of the virtue of faith informed by charity and expressed by the prayer of epiclesis. It is these two actions of the faith, the second of which constitutes the act of faith itself, that the Lord described with these words: *Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me*. (Jn. 6:45) As the Lord also declared: *He who believes in me has eternal life* (Jn. 6:47), one may also cite the summary of this entire movement of the believer towards Christ who is God: *For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life*. (Jn. 6:40) However, in the act of Eucharistic communion, in which is accomplished the act of faith itself, the human person who communicates of the Eucharist, as we had said previously (see no. 45), necessarily becomes conscious that, to all appearances, the Eucharist is a creature that serves to maintain temporal life, and that it is not, or does not seem to be, God the creator who gives eternal life. So, in Eucharistic communion, there is a struggle or combat, *the good fight of the faith* (1 Tim. 6:12), in which the human person who communicates of the Eucharist firmly takes the side of the revelation he has received from God in faith, and rejects, without however being able to destroy it, the natural knowledge that his senses infallibly transmit to him. In this combat, the supernatural, through faith, gains victory over the natural, and thus truly seems supernatural, that is, dominating the natural, without destroying it; in other words, the result of this combat is nothing other than the victory of faith, as Saint John teaches us: *This is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith*. (1 Jn. 5:4) Lastly, as any victory in combat is the result of the deployment and use of a power or force, one can conclude that, in Eucharistic communion, the human person who, through the prayer

of epiclesis, goes towards the Eucharist, is powerful and strong through his faith: he practices the precept given by Saint Peter which recommends that Christians be *firm in (your) faith*. (1 P. 5:9) Consequently, in virtue of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, the profound and ultimate meaning of the act of the breaking of the bread seems to be the expression of a corporeal and tangible power or force, which manifests exteriorly the spiritual and interior power of faith in breaking the sensible sign of the sacrament of the Eucharist, however without destroying it completely, since this destruction, by way of eating, belongs to sacramental communion itself of which the breaking of the bread is but the explanatory and preparatory liturgical rite.

47. Let us summarize our analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of man by defining three principles drawn from the conclusions we have just established. First, in virtue of the conclusion that the signification of the act of breaking the bread appears to us to be the expression of a corporeal power by which the sensible sign of the sacrament of the Eucharist is broken, we can set down as a principle that the exercise of the priestly ministry in the act of Eucharistic communion, a ministry which expresses itself through the liturgical rite of the breaking of the bread, is more effective and powerful insofar as the faithful are stronger and more courageous in the spiritual combat of faith through which they overcome themselves and their natural inclinations, that is, insofar as the faithful exercise more fully their common priesthood expressed through the prayer of epiclesis; in any human act, it is indeed the role of the spirit, the spiritual intention, which determines in fullness the proper action of the body. Secondly, in virtue of the conclusion that the act of the breaking of the bread is the corporeal expression of faith through which the human person communicates of the Eucharist by means of the prayer of epiclesis, one can establish the following principle, which states that the common priesthood of the faithful is entirely at the service of the ministerial priesthood and absolutely cannot be exercised without it, since the epiclesis, as spiritual communion and as the proper action of the common priesthood of the faithful, is fully ordered to and dependent upon Eucharistic communion, which is nothing other than the fullness of the act of the breaking of the bread, which is properly the action of the ministerial priesthood. Thirdly, in virtue of the conclusion that the act of the breaking of the bread is the result of a movement of the human person who places his hands upon the sacrament of the Eucharist, a movement which corporeally expresses the spiritual movement accomplished by means of the prayer of epiclesis, we can define the principle which states that the ministerial priesthood, which is exercised corporeally, and the common priesthood of the faithful, which is exercised in a spiritual manner, are essentially different from each other, just like the body and soul of the human person. Finally, to condense what we have developed here, it is enough to mention a simple practice of the Church, namely that it is properly priests, whether they are of the first or second order (that is, whether they are bishops or priests), who place their hand upon the Eucharist and who take it to nourish themselves, according to the command of the Lord: *Take and eat... Drink, all of you...* (Mt. 26:26–27), while the faithful, for their part, receive this sacrament from the hand of ordained ministers (among whom it is necessary to include deacons, at least according to a certain relation).

48. Throughout this analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of man, we have studied in detail the role of the epiclesis in the celebration of the Eucharist,

which has enabled us to see the profound and full meaning of the liturgical action of the breaking of the bread. But if we look at the Eucharistic celebration as a whole, we note that, as a means of expressing the faith of the human person who spiritually communicates of the Eucharist, the epiclesis relates both to the sacramental action of the consecration and to that of communion, since, on the one hand, spiritual communion is completed and crowned by sacramental communion, and on the other hand, spiritual communion of the Eucharist can begin only at the moment when this sacrament is realized and exists. By this very fact, it is precisely during the time between the act of consecration and that of communion that the epiclesis finds its existence and action, the epiclesis thus being intermediate between these two acts. But, as the epiclesis is an act of spiritual communion, the epiclesis is essentially simple and one. Thus, one may say that the epiclesis contains within itself, in an indissociable and unique manner – that is, in a spiritual manner – the actions of consecration and communion, one of which determines the beginning, and the other the end, of the time during which the epiclesis is conceived and expressed. Lastly, as the consecration and communion are the two sacramental actions which give the Eucharist its full perfection, we can conclude our analysis by saying that, in virtue of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, all the essential action of the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, contained spiritually and interiorly in the epiclesis, is also expressed, in an exterior and corporeal manner, by the liturgical rite of the breaking of the bread, a rite which, in virtue of the same relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, is – in a certain way – necessary with respect to the celebration of the Eucharist. This is why the first Christians, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, referred to the entire liturgy of the Eucharist simply as *the breaking of the bread* (Acts 2:42). In the same way, close to apostolic times, we find in the Didache (IX, 1–4) a Eucharistic prayer, or a prayer of thanksgiving, which perfectly clarifies the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, no matter whether we consider it according to the first, the second, or the third analysis. However, we prefer to quote it here, in our second analysis, for, in this Eucharistic prayer, the consecrated bread is expressed in terms of the rite of the fraction, and the consecrated wine is mentioned before the broken host, which truly highlights the intermediate place of the epiclesis between the act of consecration, which ends with the consecration of the wine, and the act of communion, which begins with the eating of the Eucharist under the appearance of bread. The following text is based on a French translation (by François Besson) of the original Greek text published by F. X. Funk in *Patres Apostolici* (Volume 1, pp. 20–22, 1901 edition):

1. Concerning the thanksgiving, give thanks as follows:
2. First concerning the cup: We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you have made known to us through Jesus your servant; glory to you forever and ever.
3. And concerning broken bread: We give thanks to you, our Father, for the life and the knowledge that you have made known to us through Jesus your servant; glory to you forever and ever.
4. As this broken bread had been scattered upon the hills and, gathered together, had become one, so, may your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever and ever.

49. To conclude our second analysis of the breaking of the bread, we would like to place before the reader's eyes the testimony of a text which illustrates the ideas we have just developed. More precisely, this text testifies to the movement accomplished by the human person who goes to Christ in order to corporeally touch him and to receive from him, by means of a powerful faith, the healing of the body and the salvation of the soul. The text consists in an episode from the life of Christ taken from the Gospel of Saint Mark; speaking of Jesus, the evangelist tells us: *A great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well. And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, Who touched my garments? And his disciples said to him, You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, Who touched me? And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease. (Mk. 5:24–34)* This is what we shall retain from our second analysis.



## THIRD ANALYSIS

### THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD IN THE THEOLOGY OF GRACE

50. In our second analysis, that of the breaking of the bread in the theology of man, we looked at the corporeal and spiritual aspects of this liturgical rite, these two aspects being united by the principle of life in the nutritive act of Eucharistic communion. Now, though the spiritual aspect of the breaking of the bread, an aspect which finds its expression in the prayer of epiclesis, is always in relation to the corporeal aspect of this same action, there nonetheless exists, in the spiritual aspect, an element that is exclusively spiritual: namely, the intention, an element of which we have already spoken (see no. 44), for the intention wishes for and desires solely the object for which it hopes but does not yet possess, and, in the case of the prayer of epiclesis, the intention is that by which Christ–Eucharist is spiritually desired but not yet possessed corporeally. On this subject, Saint Paul exhorts us in the following way: *For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* (Rm. 8:24–25) Therefore, if we want to analyze the exclusively spiritual aspect of the breaking of the bread, it is in the proper context of the intention that we must work. But, the intention or the desire to possess Christ–Eucharist is nothing other than the intention to receive from Christ, who is God, eternal life, according to these words: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.* (Jn. 6:54) Moreover, it is necessary that God, for his part, have the intention or desire to give his life in participation, which he does not do out of any necessity – for this would be contrary to his nature – but rather by grace or favor: that is, it is necessary, as a preliminary, for God, by grace and benevolence, to have predestined to participation in his own life the human person who wishes to possess Christ–Eucharist. This is what Saint Paul admirably described, when he said: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.* (Ep. 1:3–6) We have thus defined the subject of our third analysis: the breaking of the bread in the theology of grace.

51. The intention of the human person who desires Christ–Eucharist is accomplished in dependence on the action of divine grace, which is the expression of the intention

of God when he draws the person he wants into participation in his own life. To illustrate this correlative dependence of the action of man with respect to the action of God, texts from the Holy Scriptures abound. First, let us quote, under the form of image and sign, a passage from the Old Testament; it speaks of Queen Esther, a figure of the Church and in particular of Mary, when she went to King Ahasuerus, taking here the place of Christ, whose grace and favor she won: *On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, opposite the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne inside the palace opposite the entrance to the palace; and when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she found favor in his sight and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the top of the scepter.* (Esther 5:1–2) Then, in the New Testament, we find two sayings of the Lord himself, very concise and beautiful sayings: *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him (...) No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.* (Jn. 6:44, 65) But, to these scriptural texts, we must add something we have already stated (see no. 50), namely, that the properly spiritual aspect of the breaking of the bread consists in the intention of the human person who desires to receive divine life in Eucharistic communion. Now, this intention of possessing divine life is nothing other than the result of a battle or competition, accomplished in faith, between this same divine life and human life, the latter being the mode under which is accomplished the participation of the human person in divine life: it is what we have called, in accordance with Saint John, the victory of faith (see no. 46). Thus, this intention to possess divine life is, intrinsically and fully, the expression of the faith of the human person who desires to unite himself with Christ–Eucharist. But, in virtue of the necessary relation, which we have just mentioned, between divine life and human life (which serves as a means to Eucharistic communion), the human person who desires divine life must also, at the same time, opt for human life and its maintenance by means of food: he must desire to eat the Eucharistic food which is presented to him as a common and ordinary food. Moreover, the eating of the Eucharist by the human person, insofar as this eating is the obligatory means by which divine life is obtained, is absolutely first in intention with respect to the desire for divine life: *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* (Jn. 6:53) Thus, the result of the combat of faith, which is the intention of having divine life, though it appears to be the victory and the predominance of divine life over human life, in reality it is but the establishment of a balance, achieved through faith, between the desire for divine life and the desire for human life: faith harmonizes these two intentions with each other, intentions which necessarily must be those of the human person who communicates of Christ–Eucharist.

52. This balance and harmony, realized through faith, is very well highlighted by the following words of the Lord, although faith itself is not mentioned: *Among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* (Mt. 11:11) However, with regard to human life, the foundation of the act of Eucharistic communion, as it concerns an act of spiritual eating – since it is considered on the level of the intention – this same act of human life, which is the intention to eat the Eucharist humanly, is necessarily, on the one hand, preceded by at least one act of human life, and usually several such acts, since, to nourish himself, the human person must already have life in him; and on the other hand, this same act of human life is followed by at least one act of



human life, and usually more than one, since all of the fruit of spiritual eating, or the intention to nourish oneself, is gained in the corporeal eating through which the human person maintains his life for the sake of future acts. This means that the human life considered here is, intrinsically, composite and triple – if not multiple – with respect to the acts of this same human life. On the other hand, with regard to divine life, there is no doubt that, as it is intrinsically eternal, it comprises, in all and for all, but a single act of life: the divine life must always be regarded as essentially simple and one. It follows, from all that has been said to this point, that one must absolutely conclude that, as faith is an intention of the human person who desires to unite himself with Christ–Eucharist, the faith of this same human person harmonizes, simply – because spiritually – at once and under the same relation of the vital act, that which is essentially simple and one, on the one hand, and that which is essentially composite and triple, if not multiple, on the other hand. By this very fact, the faith of the human person of which we speak here certainly cannot be a natural and human faith, but rather exclusively a divine and mystical faith, since the simple reconciliation and harmony between the one and the multiple are of the order of the uncreated and divine mystery, and not of the order of created and natural reason. Thus, in virtue of the action of divine grace, insofar as it is an intention of God, upon which depends the spiritual action by which the human person desires divine life (see no. 50), it is clear that it is the action of the divine grace of God which makes it possible for the human person to reconcile and harmonize simply, through his faith, the one and the triple, or the one and the multiple. Lastly, it must be specified that, as everything that is properly of the divine order enjoys the character of fullness, it can only be through the action of a fullness of grace that the faith of the human person, insofar as it is an intention of this same person, reconciles and harmonizes mystically – though really and in all truth – the one and the multiple. This is why only those who are *blessed... with every spiritual blessing* (Eph. 1:3) are allowed to take part in the Trinitarian mystery in the vital act of Eucharistic communion: *As the living Father sent me, and I live for of the Father, so he who eats me will live for of me.* (Jn. 6:57)

53. It is in virtue of a fullness of grace that the human person, through his faith, harmonizes and balances his double intention to have human life and divine life in communion with Christ–Eucharist. Now, given that the notion of fullness characterizes the divine grace that is acting here, we must necessarily consider the harmony and balance between divine life and human life, realized by this same grace united to faith, to also be achieved in fullness. Moreover, as this harmony or balance is nothing other than the simultaneous conjunction of two disharmonies or imbalances, which consist, on one hand, in a preponderance of human life over divine life, and on the other, in a preponderance of divine life over human life (see no. 51), the notion of fullness must be considered to absolutely characterize both of these disharmonies. So, with regard to the first disharmony, in which the human person desires human life rather than divine life, one must affirm that, in virtue of the notion of fullness, the human person fully desires human life, while fully rejecting divine life. As the fullness of human life is the proper and exclusive result of the act of generation or procreation, it follows that the human person, according to this first disharmony in fullness, has the intention and desire to procreate or to beget. Similarly, with regard to the second disharmony, in which the human person desires divine life rather than human life, one must say that, in virtue of the notion of fullness, the human person fully desires divine life, while fully rejecting human life. As above,

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given that human life in fullness exclusively relates to the act of procreation or generation, it follows that the human person, according to this second disharmony in fullness, has the intention and desire to remain absolutely virgin and free of any carnal contact, and this in a fully religious way, by mode of vow, since this same human person fully desires divine life, which is fully spiritual. Consequently, the human person who, in virtue of the fullness of grace he (she) enjoys, has the desire or the intention, manifested by his (her) faith, to take part in the divine life of Christ–Eucharist, is necessarily he (she) who, simultaneously and under the same relation, has the intention both to beget and to not beget.

54. From all that has been said to this point, it is easy to conclude that the human person we are dealing with here – that is, she who, in virtue of a fullness of grace, desires to unite herself with Christ–Eucharist – is none other than Mary, she who, while still *in via* and thus necessarily living in faith, is nevertheless already *full of grace* (Lk. 1:28): she is the human person concerning whom the divine intention had been formally declared in time by an envoy of God (cf. Lk. 1:26), and not in eternity by the Spirit of God, in whom all the elect are predestined. Mary is indeed the human person who was able to conceive in her faith, together and simultaneously, both the intention to conceive the humanity of the Son of God in her womb (cf. Lk. 1:35), and the intention to remain forever a *virgin* (Lk. 1:27 – cf. Lk. 1:34), in order to thus receive divine life and eternal happiness, as her cousin Elizabeth proclaimed: *Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.* (Lk. 1:45) But it is the Lord himself who most beautifully lauded his divine Mother, when he praised her virginity: that is, the realization, in fullness, of the intention to have divine life, which is nothing other than participation in the generation of the Son or Word of the Father in the Holy Spirit: *A woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked! But he said, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!* (Lk. 11:27–28) Now, as the fullness of grace that Mary enjoys is the expression of the divine mystery (see no. 52), Mary must necessarily be regarded as mysterious or mystical: she is a mystical person. Moreover, on the one hand, as the fullness of grace, by which the person of Mary is mysterious or mystical, is of the purely spiritual order; and on the other hand, since, when Mary conceives Christ in spirit, in virtue of her fullness of grace acting correlatively with her faith, this same Christ does not yet exist in her humanity, the conception or spiritual communion of Mary, which ordinarily is accomplished after the act of the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and before the act of sacramental communion with Christ–Eucharist, necessarily cannot be accomplished here except in the very act of the corporeal conception of the humanity of Christ; thus, we must hold as certain that the mystery of Mary is absolutely internal to the very act of the corporeal conception of Christ–Man. In other words, as the Incarnation of the Word, the Son of the Father, in the womb of his Mother Mary is nothing other than the Mystery of Christ proper, the very Mystery of Mary is completely dependent upon the Mystery of Christ: Mary is the human person whom we shall call, in a way that is eternal – like Christ himself – the mystical Person of Christ.

55. We shall consider the spiritual mystery of Mary *full of grace* in the corporeal act of the human generation of Christ. Now, on the one hand, we have been able to establish the existence of the corporeal act of the generation of Christ only by basing ourselves on the spiritual act by which, in virtue of her fullness of grace, Mary

communicates of the Eucharist: with regard to human life, the act of the generation of Christ must be considered spiritually from the point of view of the notion of food, as it presents itself to us in the sacrament of the Eucharist. On the other hand, based on the fact of the hypostatic union of the two natures – divine and human – in Christ, we must similarly consider, with regard to divine life, the act of the generation of the Word by the Father from the point of view of the notion of spiritual food, not as the generation of the Word is in itself with respect to the Father who begets his Son, but rather as it is with respect to Mary, who participates in it by her spiritual communion in faith, a communion that intrinsically precedes the corporeal act of the human generation of Christ; this is why it is written, concerning the Word of God: *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.* (Deut. 8:3 – Mt. 4:4) Therefore, as for what concerns both human life and divine life, the act of the generation of Christ can be conceived spiritually by Mary only under the mode of Eucharistic food. By this very fact, to consider the spiritual mystery of Mary in the corporeal act of the generation of Christ amounts to considering the spiritual communion of Mary with Christ–Eucharist in the proper relation to the act of the breaking of the bread, as a corporeal and material expression of the properly spiritual prayer of the epiclesis (see no. 43), this act of the breaking of the bread being necessarily considered here in fullness in the act of Eucharistic communion. Now, within the framework of the theology of grace, the properly spiritual action of the human person who goes to Christ–Eucharist is, as we have seen, of the order of intention, which is nothing other than the expression of the faith of this same human person (see no. 51). Consequently, the properly corporeal aspect of this spiritual action, considered as intention or desire for Christ–Eucharist, lies fully in the material or corporeal action which consists, for the human person, in placing the hand upon Christ–Eucharist (see no. 44). But, as the final result of this corporeal action with respect to Christ–Eucharist – this final result being nothing other than an anticipation of sacramental and corporeal communion – leads to an exterior manifestation of power and physical force (see no. 46), it follows that this same corporeal action of the human person who places his hand upon Christ–Eucharist is, intrinsically, the corporeal and visible manifestation of his force or power over this same Christ present under the Eucharistic appearances. By this very fact, this corporeal action of the human person upon Christ–Eucharist is the source and origin of an active power over Christ himself: the active power of the human person over Christ–Eucharist depends entirely on this corporeal action of the human person. So, one must necessarily conclude that, in the present case of the spiritual mystery of Mary *full of grace*, a mystery considered in the intimate relation to its properly corporeal aspect, which is the act of the generation of Christ–Man, Mary – by the very fact that, in virtue of her fullness of grace and her faith, she begets her Son – exercises over this same Son a power, one that depends absolutely and entirely upon this same properly corporeal act of the human generation of Christ, and which, in virtue of this dependence, is a power in fullness, or an omnipotence, since the act of generation is an act by which life is produced in fullness by mode of principle.

56. In virtue of her fullness of grace and her faith, Mary exerts a corporeal omnipotence over Christ, her Son, whom she begets. On this subject, it is interesting to note that, at the circumcision of her new-born child, Mary clearly and publicly manifested this corporeal omnipotence relating to the conception of Christ, an omnipotence whose fullness is expressed by the imposition of the name of the Child, since a name is the verbal expression of the entire person; and an omnipotence

whose corporeal aspect finds its realization in the application, in the flesh, of the *seal of the righteousness of faith* (Rm. 4:11), a sign that fully relates to human procreation. Thus, Saint Luke tells us: *And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.* (Lk. 2:21) Now, as this corporeal omnipotence exerted by Mary over Christ absolutely depends upon the act of the generation of Christ (see no. 55), this same omnipotence, though specifically corporeal, is nevertheless necessarily of a vital and human order, both on the part of the human person who begets – that is, Mary – and on the part of Christ–Man who is begotten; in other words, this omnipotence exerted by Mary over Christ is, at once and indissociably, of the corporeal and spiritual order, and this in virtue of the simple principle of life which governs, intrinsically, the act of generation. Consequently, to the corporeal omnipotence exerted by Mary over Christ whom she begets corporeally, must indissociably be associated an omnipotence, or a power in fullness, of a properly spiritual order, an omnipotence necessarily relating to the conception of Christ in the soul or spirit of Mary, just as the corporeal omnipotence exerted by Mary over Christ relates – as we have just pointed out – to the act of the corporeal conception of this same Christ (see no. 55). But we have just established, above, that the spiritual conception of Christ in Mary is, intrinsically, of the order of intention (see no. 53 and 54): Mary, in virtue of her fullness of grace, spiritually conceives Christ in an act of faith in the word of God announced by the Angel (cf Lk. 1:35). Thus, considered here in the act of the generation of Christ, the spiritual conception of this same Christ in Mary – that is, the spiritual mystery of Mary *full of grace* – can in no way be considered as an intention as such, but rather as a spiritual power in fullness: the spiritual conception of Christ in Mary is nothing other than the passive power, of a properly spiritual order and necessarily considered in fullness, which allows – as a kind of intention – the act of the generation of Christ–Man by Mary, passive power being that by which the corresponding act is realized and exists. By this very fact, contrary to the corporeal omnipotence exerted by Mary over Christ whom she begets – a corporeal omnipotence which depends in every way on the act of the generation of this same Christ – the spiritual omnipotence that is also and indissociably exerted by Mary *full of grace* is, intrinsically, the omnipotence, or the passive power in fullness, upon which this same act of the generation of Christ absolutely depends.

57. In virtue of what we have established above (see no. 55 and 56), we must intrinsically affirm that, by the fact that the spiritual mystery of Mary *full of grace* is considered in the act of the generation of Christ–Man by Mary, his Mother, the latter exerts over Christ, her Son, an omnipotence of the vital order which is, in its properly corporeal aspect, the omnipotence that absolutely depends upon the act of the generation of Christ, and in its properly spiritual aspect, the power in fullness upon which this same act of the generation of Christ absolutely depends. This means that the vital omnipotence exerted by Mary over Christ is fully internal and indissociable from the act of the generation of Christ, a vital omnipotence thus considered, in a manner that is simple and one, in terms of the principle of life which governs the act being considered here, as passive power and as active power in fullness, or omnipotence as such. Now, on the one hand, as the act of life, in which indissociably resides the vital power by which this same act of life exists, is an act of eternal life, since it is always beginning, and since, by this very fact, it never ends; and on the other hand, as the act of life, which we are considering here and in which the vital omnipotence, exerted by Mary over Christ, remains and persists indissociably, is

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properly and truly an act of temporal life; it necessarily must be concluded that Mary exerts over Christ, in virtue of her fullness of grace, the vital omnipotence of the divinity itself, an omnipotence that is essentially composed – since it is considered in the human person Mary's participation in it – of the simple union between the passive power in fullness, of the spiritual order, and the active omnipotence, of the corporeal order. In other words, Mary exerts *by grace* the same vital omnipotence that Christ, as God, exerts *by nature*, since there is but a single divine omnipotence: *the Son is almighty by nature, and the Mother only by grace*. (Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, ch. VI, § I)

58. To conclude this analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of grace, let us quote a few passages from the Holy Scriptures relating to the notions established above. First, concerning the omnipotence of divine life in its corporeal aspect, or active omnipotence, Saint Luke reports to us the following words of the Angel addressed to Mary: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God*. (Lk. 1:35) Secondly, concerning the spiritual aspect of the omnipotence of divine life, as passive power, Saint John tells us: *In the beginning was the Word (...) To all who received him, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*. (Jn. 1:1,12–13) And, thirdly, concerning the omnipotence of divine life in virtue of which the humanity of Christ was conceived with the co-operation of Mary, Saint Matthew offers us this beautiful summary: *Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit*. (Mt. 1:18) This is what we shall retain from our third analysis.

59. Let us now draw conclusions from the first three analyses we have made on the breaking of the bread considered within the framework of the relation between the grace of God and the free will of man. In virtue of everything that has been said to this point, we can say that Mary *full of grace* is the one and only human person who is fully capable of communicating of Christ–Eucharist, and thus, of obtaining the eternal life that is in Jesus, her Son according to the flesh. But, as God absolutely wants the salvation of all the men and women he has created in his Love (even though, in fact, not all will be saved), the Lord has placed in Mary the potentiality of participating in the fullness of grace that belongs to her. In other words, the salvation of man lies in the active, free, and fully-consented-to (although this participation is not necessarily a fully-informed one) participation in all of the potentiality of the grace that is in Mary. It is by becoming, to some extent, similar to Mary who is Immaculate in her Conception that all men and women are called to realize in themselves the eternal plan of God, as Saint Paul described in the following way: *God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him*. (Eph. 1:3–4) However, as Mary is not God, but rather a human creature, the fullness of grace that is in Mary, and all the power that derives from it, can unfortunately be checked by the freedom of the man or woman who would refuse, in any way, to allow himself or herself to be drawn to the Love of God, for in that case, it would not directly be the grace of God that is rejected, but rather the very person of Mary, a simple creature, considered in all of her personal dimension as *full of grace*, this last expression being nothing other than the very

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name of Mary, that is, the verbal expression of her entire person. Let us close by saying that, in the continuation of this study, we shall discuss only the case in which the grace of God is truly effective and succeeds in saving a man or woman in a manner that is absolutely free: we shall see how the grace of God triumphs in the world to give birth to that great Mystery that is the Church, *the universal sacrament of salvation* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 48).

## Chapter II

# EFFICACIOUS GRACE IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES or The Mystery of Grace as it was revealed by the Holy Spirit

## INTRODUCTION

60. The introduction of the second chapter of our study on the relation between grace and free will shall enable us to see in a new light, in a way that is simpler and more concise, everything that has been developed in the first three analyses devoted to the breaking of the bread. So, as we had described in our first analysis (*The breaking of the bread in the theology of the liturgy*), the breaking of the bread is an action or liturgical rite that is properly material and corporeal and which possesses, jointly and simultaneously, as a human act (see no. 42 and 43), an aspect that is essentially spiritual in the reality called the *epiclesis*, which we have amply developed in our second analysis. Now, we have seen that the prayer of epiclesis includes and contains within it the two sacramental actions of consecration and communion. Moreover, as prayer is essentially simple and one, these two sacramental actions of the Eucharistic celebration must necessarily be considered to be one and indissociable. Thus, as the consecration is a properly divine action, and as communion is a properly human action (see no. 46), it follows that the prayer of epiclesis, in order for it to be understood in a full and complete way, it must be considered to be an act that is accomplished, in a manner that is indissociable and one, by both God and man. Thus, to the consideration of prayer as a human act, which we have studied in the second analysis, has been added the study of prayer as a divine act: this is the analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of grace, since any divine action *ad extra*, such as the realization of the sacrament, is not necessary to the divinity, but rather absolutely free, that is, done by grace and favor; and also since the sacrament that God realizes here is nothing other than that by which Christ, true God and true Man, is made present: it is the sacrament of the incarnate Word who is *full of grace* (Jn. 1:14).

61. We do not intend to work out here a complete treatise on grace: we will simply provide, in the following pages, an outline which can later be used in the development of such a treatise, an outline based on the conclusions arrived at in our preceding analyses. Thus, in our analysis on the breaking of the bread in the theology of man, we have been able to arrive at this conclusion: the epiclesis is the

spiritual expression of a corporeal movement of the human person who goes towards the Eucharist in order to take it and nourish himself with it (see no. 44). As this conclusion rests upon the fact that both the action of the breaking of the bread and that of the epiclesis find their fullness in the nutritive and vital act of Eucharistic communion, it is properly the principle of human life which is at the origin of the spiritual aspect of the act of the breaking of the bread. From this it followed that the analysis of the breaking of the bread in the theology of grace, as an analysis of the spiritual aspect of the breaking of the bread, could only be accomplished in the proper and exclusive reference to the vital act of Eucharistic communion: the epiclesis, as we have already said (see no. 45), must be considered solely in the properly vital action of sacramental communion. By this very fact, within the framework of the relation between grace and free will, the act of the breaking of the bread must not be understood in itself, but rather under the form of its fullness, which is the act of the eating of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

62. We shall now consider the prayer of epiclesis in the very act of sacramental communion. Now, although this act is, and always shall remain, a communion of human and natural life, it is nonetheless an intimate union of life between Christ and the human person, a union considered from a wholly supernatural and divine point of view, according to the words of Christ himself: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.* (Jn. 6:56–57) Thus, as prayer, being spiritual, is simple, one can say that the union of Christ and the human person in Eucharistic communion is simple and one: it is, at once, both a sacramental and a spiritual communion. In other words, all who communicate both sacramentally and spiritually of the Christ present within themselves are truly *partakers of the divine nature* (2 Peter 1:4) and like *Gods* (Ps. 81:6 – Jn. 10:34). But, God is, intrinsically, unique; and, as such, he is fully self-sufficient. Consequently, the human person who communicates does not participate in the divinity by necessity, but rather by grace or divine favor. Now, as this similitude, with respect to the relation of divine and eternal life, between Christ and the human person, rests solely upon the simple character of the prayer of epiclesis, we can conclude, from all that has been written to this point, that the prayer of epiclesis, as an action that is both divine and human (see no. 60), is the action in which are eternally united the grace of God and the freedom of man, fully expressed by the prayer of epiclesis; and that, by this very fact, it is only in the prayer of epiclesis that the efficacious grace of God acts – this efficacious grace being that which saves for all eternity, according to the word of Saint Paul: *By grace you have been saved.* (Eph. 2:5)

63. In Eucharistic communion, the effect of efficacious grace consists in making Christ and the human person who communicates equal and similar to each other, and this, with respect solely to divine and eternal life (see no. 62). Now, in both the person of Christ present in the Eucharist and the human person who communicates, divine life is united simply, by the very principle of life, to their respective humanity, though under a different mode for each of them, Christ being God by nature, and the human person by grace or participation. Thus, one can say that, in Eucharistic communion, Christ and the human person who communicates are equal and similar to each other, not only with respect to divine life, but also, by that very fact, with respect to human life. In other words, the person of Christ and the human person



who communicates of the Eucharist are equal and similar to each other. But, when we speak of human beings, one absolutely cannot conceive of a similitude between two people, unless it is in the proper and exclusive case in which these two same people are united to each other by the bond of marriage, that is, unless they are each other's husband and wife: *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* (Mt. 19:5 – cf. Gn. 2:24) As Christ is a man, he is obviously the husband; and thus the human person who communicates is the wife, whether this person humanly be a man or a woman, since, speaking of the eternal life in which man participates, the Lord declared: *Those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, for they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.* (Lk. 20:35–36)

64. Through the efficacious grace of God united to the freedom of man, Christ–Eucharist and the human person who communicates are united to each other, as husband and wife, by the matrimonial bond. Now, marriage requires, intrinsically, a full and complete gift of self by each of the spouses to his or her partner: the total gift of the person to his or her spouse is absolutely essential to the existence of the matrimonial bond. Consequently, as the similitude between Christ–Eucharist and the person who communicates – and, by this very fact, the spousal or matrimonial bond that results from it – rests entirely upon the fact that the prayer of epiclesis is considered to act in the vital act of Eucharistic communion (see no. 61), it follows that the prayer of epiclesis necessarily enjoys, in the case we are now discussing, the character of fullness. By this very fact, one must affirm, on the one hand, that the soul or the spirit of the human person who communicates of the Eucharist is absolutely, and without any possible doubt, *full of grace* (Lk. 1:28); and on the other hand, that the vital and nutritive act of Eucharistic communion of this same human person is necessarily an act of life in fullness, for in him the prayer of epiclesis acts, conferring upon him the character of fullness: it is thus a nutritive and vital act accomplished by mode of generation or procreation. Thus, we can easily conclude that the spousal union realized in Eucharistic communion by means of efficacious grace is nothing other than the union between Christ and the Virgin Mary, his Mother, who thus is at the same time his Wife or his *woman* (Jn. 2:4 – 19:26). However, as Christ is considered here, according to a divine aspect, as he who gives divine life to Mary; and as it is not directly to the Son–Word, but rather to the Holy Spirit, that is attributed the giving of divine life (since, according to the Creed, he is *the Lord, the giver of life*); it must be specified that the Virgin Mary is, in a direct way, the Bride of the Holy Spirit, and that She is only indirectly the Bride of Christ, her Son–Man, upon whom the Holy Spirit rests (cf. Lk. 4:18 – Is. 61:1) as the Master upon his Servant.



## DEVELOPMENT

65. In order that we might be able to give God our soul, and thus our freedom, we must have the grace of God in us: God can receive only what is pleasing to him. By this very fact, to give one's soul to God is to render to him his grace, since the grace one has received belongs to God. Now, Christ said: *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life [ «animam», in the Latin text of the Vulgate ] for his friends.* (Jn. 15:13) It follows that *to give thanks to God* and *to love God* are one and the same thing. Grace, considered in itself, and charity thus have a close, indissociable relation with each other. That is, we are dealing here with the relation between the production of grace by God, or God's action of grace with respect to man, and the use of grace by man, or man's action of grace with respect to God. As the celebration of the Eucharist is the expression of *praise and thanksgiving* (Council of Vatican II, Decree *On the Ministry and Life of Priests*, no. 5), this fundamental link between grace and charity finds itself at the heart of the entire question of the Eucharistic celebration. The study of this link in Mary will enable us to provide an explanation for it, to the extent that this mystery can be penetrated, since *as St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ.* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 63)

66. Insofar as it is the result of, or the fullness of, a supernatural movement of the Church as she goes to Christ–Eucharist in faith, Eucharistic communion, though it is and will always remain a communion of natural human life, is nonetheless an intimate union of life between Christ and the Church, a union considered from a wholly supernatural and divine point of view: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.* (Jn. 6:56–57) Now, any supernatural union of man with God, in Christ, can be achieved only insofar as that man is pleasing to God – that is, if he possesses the grace of God (see no. 65). Thus, the action of the Church as she goes to Christ to unite herself with him in Eucharistic communion fundamentally rests upon the gift of grace granted to mankind by God: *No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.* (Jn. 6:65) In other words, this action of the Church with respect to the Eucharist, or Eucharistic communion, is the fullness of an action in which the Church goes to Christ with the divine grace that she has received: it is an *action of grace* in fullness.

67. As we have pointed out, Eucharistic communion is the act of the breaking of the bread considered in its fullness (see no. 61). Consequently, in virtue of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis, we must consider the act of Eucharistic communion to be the corporeal expression of the properly spiritual action of the Church as she goes in an action of grace to Christ–Eucharist. Now, we have

seen that the movement of the Church as she goes to the Eucharist is accomplished interiorly by means of the spiritual power of faith, a power manifested exteriorly by the corporeal power that breaks the accidents of the Eucharistic bread (see no. 46). Consequently, the action of grace that is expressed exteriorly by the act of the breaking of the bread considered in its fullness – that is, by the act of Eucharistic communion – is nothing other than the action of powerful or efficacious grace. But, as Christ is personally present in the Eucharist, and since this same Christ, as the author and source of grace, is *full of grace* (Jn. 1:14), it follows that, when the Church goes to Christ–Eucharist with the efficacious grace of God, this same efficacious grace returns to its author and becomes confused with him: this is an action of the Church when she renders to God his grace in Christ–Eucharist. By this very fact, Eucharistic communion, which is the union of Christ–Eucharist and the Church, is, strictly speaking, the sacramental realization, and consequently the corporeal expression, of efficacious grace. So, our intention shall entirely be to study the act of Eucharistic communion from the point of view of the notion of efficacious grace, and, consequently, to draw up an outline suitable for the elaboration of a complete treatise on the relation between the grace of God and the free will of man.

68. In itself, efficacious grace is a joint action of the grace of God and the free will of man. As Eucharistic communion is the sacramental manifestation of efficacious grace, we must necessarily find in the notion of communion both the action of the grace of God and the action of human freedom. Now, to communicate of the Body and the Blood of Christ is to *proclaim the Lord's death*, as Saint Paul teaches us: *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* (1 Co. 11:26) Thus, it is in this action of proclaiming the death of the Lord that the grace of God and the freedom of man cooperate. Indeed, in the expression *the Lord's death*, we clearly perceive the redeeming sacrifice of the Cross offered for the *forgiveness of sins* (Mt. 26:28), which is the first and fundamental grace necessary to all the descendants of Adam, who have all *sinned* (Rm. 5:12). And, in the expression *proclaim*, we perceive the proclamation of faith in the divinity of Christ: faith is needed to announce and proclaim that the Man who was crucified and died on the Cross is not only man, but also Lord and God; since faith engages by itself the free will of man, we clearly see in the expression *to announce* a reference to human freedom. Thus, in the notion of Eucharistic communion, the two notions of grace and freedom are found. But if we look for the profound and radical foundation of efficacious grace, we find that it is love. Indeed, Saint John assures us that *every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God* (1 Jn. 4:2), which is a fact that finds its ultimate realization in *proclaiming the Lord's death*. Now, the same Apostle adds: *He who loves is born of God* (1 Jn. 4:7). Moreover, Saint John specifies that *love is of God* (1 Jn. 4:7); and also: *In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.* (1 Jn. 4:10) Thus, we can distinguish, in efficacious grace, a properly divine action and a properly human action: the divine action consists in love of God for man, a love realized in the death of the very Son of God, since he *loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal. 2:20); the human action consists in a communion, through faith, with God's love for man, a communion by which man loves God and thus gives, with the very love of God, love for love: *We know and believe the love God has for us.* (1 Jn. 4:16). Now, this human action is always second with respect to the divine action, which is first, according to these words: *We love, because he (God) first loved us.* (1 Jn. 4:19) The human action is thus totally dependent upon divine action: man acts

entirely according to the eternal will of God; however, as it is an act of love, human action is essentially free and without constraint: man is not moved by grace or love of God, but he is drawn by that love which *is strong as death* (Cant. 8:6).

69. The love between God and man is the radical foundation of efficacious grace. But we must go further than this. Thus, Saint John tells us, twice, that *God is love* (1 Jn. 4:8 and 16). Consequently, when God testifies to his love for man, that is, when he gives man the gift of grace, which is a created divine good, he intends to truly give man all that he is as uncreated Grace: in and through his act of free love, God wants to give all of himself to man. In the same way, when man freely receives, in and through faith, the gift of God which is his Love, he intends to give God the gift of his entire person: *by [faith] man commits his whole self freely to God* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Dei Verbum*, no. 5). Efficacious grace is thus a common action, in which God gives himself to man, and man to God: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* (Jn. 3:16) As the notion of divine gift in itself possesses a stable and permanent character, Saint John summarizes in the following few words the entire economy of efficacious grace: *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.* (1 Jn. 4:15) But if we examine the concept of efficacious grace from the point of view of the notion of gift, we distinguish the action of God, who is always first, and gives; and the action of man, who is always second and dependent upon God, and receives, through faith. In other words, there is: a primary term, God; a secondary term, man; an intermediate term, living faith informed by charity. Consequently, the action of God consists in depositing his gift in the faith of man, that is, in his intellect, that faculty of the soul in which resides the virtue of faith. The action of man, after he has recognized the presence of the gift of God in his intellect, then consists in receiving the gift of God through an act of the will, that faculty of the soul in which resides the virtue of charity which informs faith. Indeed, Saint John tells us: *We know (=through the intellect) and believe (=through the will) the love God has for us.* (1 Jn. 4:16) Now, in the human soul considered *in via*, the various faculties of memory, intellect, and will are necessarily exercised at distinct times. It follows that the action of God who loves man in giving him his grace, and the action of man who loves God through the virtue of charity, are two actions which are performed at distinct times; this is why Saint Augustine teaches us that «*gratia praevenit caritatem*» *grace precedes charity* (De dono perseverantiae, c. 16, PL 45, 1018). In other words, the action of God who gives himself to man is performed in a first period of time, and the action of man who gives himself to God is performed in a second period of time. Efficacious grace is thus the result of these two actions and it is realized when the second period of time has come to a close: it is the summit and the crowning of the human action which is performed in dependence on the divine action.

70. But what one must especially note in this common action of God and man performed for the realization of efficacious grace, is that the grace given to man by God necessarily tends toward the infinite, since it consists in the gift of God himself (see no. 69). Thus, the intermediate element – that is, faith – which serves to enable man to receive the gift of God, must be able to receive a gift that tends toward the infinite: this faith must be of the same order as the gift that it is to receive. In other words, the man who, through his faith, receives the gift of God, insofar as this gift is God himself, must be of the same order as God: he must be of the divine order, he

must be God, at least in a certain manner. Now, on the one hand, in order to be God, it is sufficient to possess one of the divine perfections. On the other hand, the notion of efficacious grace, as we have defined it (see no. 67), rests on the notion of power which characterizes faith in Eucharistic communion. Thus, we must determine the identity of the man who, while he is *in via* – that is, able to exercise his faith – possesses the divine perfection of power, that is, divine omnipotence. To do this, let us first summarize what we had previously established. In the realization of efficacious grace, three elements come into play (see no. 69): a first element, which gives; a second element, which receives; an intermediate element, which serves to give and to receive at once. He who gives grace is properly Christ; and he who receives grace is properly he who believes in Christ the Son of God. Indeed, Saint John says that Christ is *full of grace and truth* (Jn. 1:14) and that *from his fulness have we all received* (Jn. 1:16). The intermediate element, faith, thus serves to transmit the grace of Christ to *all who believed in his name* (Jn. 1:12), and also reciprocally, since *whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God* (1 Jn. 4:15).

71. Saint John insists on the mode by which efficacious grace is realized; it is the mode of birth or generation: *To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* (Jn. 1:12–13) Thus, on the one hand, according to the mode of generation, he who gives grace must be regarded as he who begets. As image (cf. Col. 1:15) of the Father, Christ is truly our Father in the order of grace and thus, according to this relation, we can attribute to the Son of God the following words of Saint James, who declares: *Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights... Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth.* (James 1:17–18) Moreover, Saint Paul, in imitation of Christ, reports in his first epistle to the Corinthians: *I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* (1 Cor. 4:15) On the other hand, those who receive grace must then be regarded as those who are begotten by Christ: they are *children of light* (Eph. 5:8), that is, children of Christ, who is *the true Light* (Jn. 1:9). But those who are begotten by Christ must above all be regarded as being unable to beget. Indeed, the Lord said: *Those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, for they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.* (Lk. 20:35–36) That is, in *that age*, or in eternal life, no one has the ability to generate, either naturally (according to the body) or supernaturally (according to the spirit), for all are turned towards God who has begotten them: *all live to him* (Lk. 20:38). Now, eternal life has already begun here below through faith, for Christ said: *He who believes has eternal life.* (Jn. 6:47) Thus, all who were born of God through faith cannot beget. So, the first element can be reduced to *he who begets* or *he who can beget*, and the second element to *he who cannot beget*. Thus, these two elements are opposed to each other with regard to the notion of generation. But as the intermediate element – faith – is common both to the action of God who gives grace and to the action of man who receives it, one may say that this intermediate element acts as a mediator that reconciles the two extreme elements opposed to each other. Now, every mediator necessarily possesses, at least in a certain way, the character of each of the two extremes it unites. It follows that faith must have, at the same time, both the proper character of he who can beget, and the proper character of he who cannot beget. In other words, the person who possesses

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the faith allowing the transmission of the grace of Christ to those who believe in him – and reciprocally – must be able to beget and at the same time must not be able to beget, all these things understood either corporeally or spiritually. As efficacious grace, which is wholly spiritual, finds its sacramental realization and its corporeal expression in Eucharistic communion, which is both spiritual and corporeal, we can conclude that this person is none other than Mary, the Mother of God, the Virgin who *shall conceive and bear a son* (Is. 7:14).

72. Mary, Virgin and Mother, is the person who, through her faith, received for us the Love of God at the Incarnation of the Word: *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.* (1 Jn. 4:9) Now, Mary, who is *ever Virgin* and who asked herself how this childbirth was to take place (cf. Lk. 1:34), could only become Virgin and Mother after having received into her spirit the following explanations provided by the Archangel Gabriel: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.* (Lk. 1:35) Moreover, Mary, through the Incarnation of the Word, became the wife of the Holy Spirit; she gave all of her person to He who is *the power of the Most High* (Lk. 1:35): *The Holy Spirit had already come down upon her and she became his faithful spouse at the Annunciation.* (H.H. John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 26) Therefore, from all that has been written to this point, we can say that Mary, Virgin and Mother, is the human person who, being *in via*, received, through the gift of her person, the divine perfection of omnipotence: Mary, wife of the Holy Spirit, is almighty in a personal manner. As the name of Mary – that is, the expression of her entire person – is *full of grace* (Lk. 1:28), Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori teaches us, concerning Christ and Mary, that *the Son is almighty by nature, and the Mother only by grace.* (The Glories of Mary, ch. VI, § I) Finally, if we consider the act of the breaking of the bread in its relationship with the domain of grace, we see that it is Mary who, through her powerful and strong faith, wages spiritual combat on behalf of the Church, by breaking the Bread of Life for her, in order to allow the Church to go without hindrance to the Christ of the Eucharist.





## SYNTHESIS

73. The breaking of the bread is a properly material and corporeal action, as we have described it when speaking of it as a liturgical rite; but this action, if one regards it as a human act, also possesses, jointly and simultaneously with the corporeal aspect which belongs to it, an essentially spiritual aspect, one which is expressed by the reality we call the epiclesis. But we have considered the spiritual aspect of the breaking of the bread only in virtue of a dialectical relation between this same spiritual aspect and the corporeal aspect of the breaking of the bread, in which one of these aspects is considered first and the other is considered second (see no. 44). Moreover, if we look at the conclusions of our analysis of the breaking of the bread, we note that the most spiritual notion – because it is closest to God who *is spirit* (Jn. 4:24) – is that of the faith through which the human person, by means of the prayer of epiclesis, comes into contact with the God of the Eucharist (see no. 45). In addition, we have established the existence of a certain power which properly possesses this same virtue of faith, a spiritual power corporeally manifested and expressed in the physical and material action of the breaking of the bread (see no. 46). Thus, we can say that the most spiritual notion of the liturgical rite of the breaking of the bread consists in the spiritual power exerted on God himself by the human person. But there is no doubt that God, as Creator and *Ruler of all* (Rev. 1:8), is absolutely omnipotent: he possesses in himself and for himself all power, no matter what. Consequently, the spiritual power that the human person possesses in virtue of his faith does not and cannot belong to that human person as a right, but only and solely as a favor or grace from the divine liberality of the Creator with regard to that creature: it is purely and simply a gift of God. On this subject, we shall quote the following words of Christ as he voluntarily subjected himself to the legal power of Pontius Pilate, a representative of human and temporal authority: *You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.* (Jn. 19:11) In the same way, if one considers the prayer of epiclesis as being a movement, in faith, of the human person towards Christ–Eucharist, the following words of the Lord summarize quite well what we have just said: *No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.* (Jn. 6:65)

74. By grace or divine favor, the human person who, in virtue of his faith, unites himself with Christ–Eucharist, possesses a certain power. Now, insofar as it is spiritual, faith is essentially simple. Thus, the union, accomplished through the virtue of faith, between Christ–Eucharist and the human person who believes is an essentially simple union. By this very fact, insofar as the human person possesses a certain power in virtue of his faith in the God of the Eucharist, one must necessarily affirm that this same human person unites himself simply with Christ–Eucharist considered, intrinsically and absolutely, as God the Almighty and sovereign Ruler of all. In other words, through his simple union, in faith, with the God of the Eucharist,

the human person who believes possesses, through divine grace, omnipotence, just as God himself possesses it by nature. But, in virtue of the relation between the breaking of the bread and the epiclesis (see no. 43), to the omnipotence of faith, that is, to faith in fullness, which is expressed by the prayer of epiclesis, necessarily corresponds a breaking of the bread in fullness, which is nothing other than the nutritive and vital act of Eucharistic communion (ibid). Thus, it is properly in this same act of Eucharistic communion that the human person, who unites himself to Christ–Eucharist through his faith expressed by the prayer of epiclesis, possesses the divine omnipotence of Christ who is God. Now, the nutritive and vital act of Eucharistic communion is nothing other than a participation in the unique act of divine and eternal life in which the Father begets his Son in the Holy Spirit: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life (...) As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.* (Jn. 6:54 and 57) So, one thus sees that the notion of divine omnipotence and the notion of eternal life are indissociable from each other (see no. 57). Therefore, from what we have written to this point, we must necessarily conclude that the human person who – due to the faith that unites him with Christ–Eucharist – possesses, through grace, divine omnipotence in the nutritive and vital act of Eucharistic communion, also possesses, also through grace, divine and eternal life; he is thus saved, according to the word of Saint Paul who says to us: *By grace you have been saved.* (Eph. 2:5) If we look at the episode from the Gospel concerning the woman with a hemorrhage (see no. 49), we can see that the divine omnipotence possessed by the human person who believes is physically manifested through the *power that had gone forth from Jesus* (Mk. 5:30) at the moment of contact between Christ and the human person; in the same way, we see that it is truly in virtue of her faith, which had become omnipotent through the grace of God, that the sick woman was saved, as Jesus said to her: *Daughter, your faith has made you well.* (Mk. 5:34).

75. Through grace, the human person who communicates of the Eucharist, both spiritually and corporeally, possesses the divine omnipotence of Christ–Eucharist. Now, on the one hand, as divine omnipotence is indissociable from God's unique act of eternal life (see no. 74), and on the other hand, as eternal life, in Eucharistic communion, is participated in by the human person in the form of an act of human life, which is a nutritive act, one must hold as certain that divine omnipotence, in this same vital act of Eucharistic communion, is absolutely indissociable from the very life of the human person who, through divine grace, unites himself, body and spirit, with Christ–Eucharist. Moreover, as life concerns, intrinsically, the entire human person who lives, one must necessarily conclude that, in the act of Eucharistic communion, it is properly the entire human person who, through grace, is almighty like the Christ–Eucharist to whom he is united in body and spirit. Consequently, as power is, intrinsically, a grace or gift of God (see no. 73) and as the human person is fully signified by the name that he is given, it follows that the human person who communicates spiritually and corporeally of the Eucharist bears the proper and adequate name of *full of grace* (Lk. 1:28). Thus, this person is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the only human person who – while still *in via* and able, by this very fact, to communicate in faith of the sacraments – was granted the privilege of the fullness of grace, even before her time on earth had come to a close. Now, it should be added that, because God, who is almighty, presents himself in human form in Christ–Eucharist, we must hold as certain that the person of Christ considered in his humanity is almighty, just as he is according to his divinity, and this in virtue of the

communication of idioms in this same person of Christ. Now, divine omnipotence, because it is divine, is absolutely simple and one. Thus, as, on the one hand, Christ–Man is almighty, and on the other hand, Mary, the Mother of this same Christ, is also, through grace, almighty, one must affirm once again that Christ and Mary are similar to each other with respect to the divine omnipotence which characterizes their respective persons. Lastly, as, humanly speaking, two people are similar to each other only if they are united by the bond of marriage, one cannot fail to say and declare to be true that Christ and Mary, his Mother, are each other's spouses. This is why Christ–Husband calls Mary his *woman* (Jn. 2:4; 19:26), though she nonetheless remains, at the same time, his Mother (cf. Jn. 2:1; 19:26). Let us specify once again that, since the Holy Spirit is *the Power of the Most High* (Lk. 1:35), Mary must be considered to be the Wife of the Holy Spirit in a direct way, and that it is only indirectly that She is the Bride of Christ, her Son–Man, upon whom is the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk. 4:18; Is. 61:1), as the Master over his Servant.

76. We have just established that, by means of the efficacious grace that she possesses in fullness under the mode of the prayer of epiclesis, the Virgin Mary is the Bride of Christ and similar to Him in the vital and nutritive act of Eucharistic communion accomplished by her according to the mode of generation. Now, since the prayer of epiclesis, as spiritual communion, is a preparation for sacramental and corporeal communion, this same prayer of epiclesis is nothing other than the conception in spirit, or the intention, properly so-called, of corporeally conceiving and begetting Christ according to his humanity, that is, the Body of Christ. Moreover, it is clear that, at the moment that Christ–Man is conceived in spirit by the Virgin Mary, this same Christ does not yet exist according to his humanity. Lastly, as the prayer of epiclesis is accomplished in the period of time between the act of the consecration and that of sacramental communion, and thus necessarily after the act through which Christ is sacramentally present and exists – that is, after the act of the consecration – we must conclude from the foregoing that the prayer of epiclesis, as a spiritual conception of Christ–Man by the Virgin Mary, is in the order of mystery, since only the notion of mystery can reconcile that which surpasses created reason, such as the fact that, simultaneously and under the same relation, Christ–Man both already exists and does not yet exist. Consequently, by means of efficacious grace acting in her soul, it is properly the Mystical Body of Christ that the Virgin Mary conceives in her spirit within the vital and nutritive act of Eucharistic communion. But we must also add that, in virtue of the character of fullness which characterizes the Eucharistic communion of Mary (see no. 75), it is the entire Mystical Body of Christ, or the Mystical Body of Christ in fullness, which Mary spiritually conceives; and likewise, in virtue of the principle of life, a principle which concerns absolutely all of the human person who lives, and a principle which governs the act of Eucharistic communion which we are studying, it is intrinsically necessary to give the Virgin Mary the name *Mystical Person of Christ*: she is in a personal way – mystically, but truly – *the Body of Christ* (1 Cor. 12:27).

77. In the vital act of Eucharistic communion, Mary, the Mother of Christ, is also his Wife, by means of the efficacious grace of God and in virtue of her prayer; she therefore bears the name of the reality which belongs to her, that of *Mystical Person of Christ*. By this very fact, it is properly in Mary that the Mystical Body of Christ spiritually communicates of the Eucharist, since this same Mystical Body of Christ is united simply to the spirit or soul of Mary in whom it is conceived and begotten.

## CHAPTER II – IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES – SYNTHESIS

Moreover, one must affirm that the Mystical Body of Christ spiritually communicates of the Eucharist with Mary, since, given that we are dealing here with the action of the epiclesis within sacramental or corporeal communion, Mary and each and every member of the Mystical Body of Christ are people who – being composed of a body and a soul, and living in time, which is the domain that relates to all sacramental action – are necessarily separate in virtue of their corporeal condition, while nonetheless remaining united in spirit. Lastly, one must necessarily declare and define the essential fact that the Mystical Body of Christ spiritually communicates of the Eucharist only through Mary. Indeed, as Mary communicates in fullness of the Eucharist, both in her soul and in her body (see no. 75), and as the Eucharist gives eternal life to he who eats it in body and soul, one thus cannot fail to affirm that, from the moment of the Incarnation of the Word in her womb, Mary, by means of the efficacious grace of God, is immortal according to her soul and her body, that is, according to that in which we consider Mary to be, not only a simple human person, but, even more so, the Mystical Person of Christ. Thus, to Mary, considered in her soul and body, apply the following words: *This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die.* (Jn. 6:50) Consequently, the spousal union between Christ and Mary, and consequently, this same union between the Holy Spirit and Mary (see no. 75), realized in Eucharistic communion by means of efficacious grace, is absolutely and eternally insoluble, and thus, the spiritual communion of the Mystical Body of Christ with the Eucharist, which is certainly accomplished in Mary and with Mary, is realized, no less certainly, through Mary. In conclusion, since it is exclusively in Eucharistic communion that efficacious grace and salvation are found (see no. 74), we must hold as certain that Mary is the mediatrix of efficacious grace between Christ and his Body, the Church: it is through Mary, with Her, and in Her that the Mystical Body of Christ achieves its salvation through the efficacious grace of Christ who is God.

## Chapter III

### THE SACRAMENT OF THE CHURCH IN SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

or

### The Mystery of the Church and Efficacious Grace in a Sacramental Theology

I

78. The Second Vatican Council refers to the Church as the *universal sacrament of salvation* (Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 48). In this sense, the Church as a whole is a sign capable of conferring upon the men and women of the entire world the grace of salvation, the efficacious grace of God. This notion of *sacrament*, when applied to the Church, is closely related to that of *mystery*, as in when one speaks of *celebrating the sacred mysteries*, which means to *celebrate the sacrament par excellence*, that of the Eucharist. Nevertheless, as a sign that is capable of conferring grace, the Church–Sacrament or the «*sacramentum Ecclesiae*» (in Latin) must also be understood in a sense that is very close to – almost identical with – that used for the seven commonly recognized sacraments. In order to try to provide a proof for this, let us go back a little in time, back to the thirteenth century, a time that was rich in its flowering of saints and doctors, among whom Saint Thomas Aquinas is the most splendid jewel!

79. We do not intend to discuss the mystery of the Church in its entirety, but only that which concerns its building up. Specifically, we shall identify and analyze in detail those elements which are necessary to the building up of the «*sacramentum Ecclesiae*». Thus, this study will be nothing other than the identification of the essential elements in the celebration of the Eucharist, since «*in hoc Sacramento totum mysterium nostrae salutis comprehenditur*» *this sacrament comprises all the mystery of our salvation* (Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q. 83, a. 4, corp.), this sacrament being the Church, «*universale salutis sacramentum*» *the universal sacrament of salvation* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 48).

80. In his *Summa Theologica*, although he spoke here and there of the Church, Saint Thomas Aquinas did not devote any particular question to a detailed study of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae». This omission should not astonish us, for the Theologians of that time did not have a great interest in the mystery of the Church, and regarded it as but an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation. Thus, Cardinal Billot, in the first decades of the twentieth century, explains: «Quocumque modo appelletur (Ecclesia), statim apparebit hunc tractatum (Ecclesiae) ad illum alium de Verbo incarnato sic referri, ut non tam dicendus sit nova disputatio, quam illius prioris continuatio et necessarium complementum.» *No matter how the Church is referred to, one immediately discovers that this treatise (on the Church) refers to the treatise on the incarnate Word, so that it is not a question of a new problem to be discussed but rather a continuation and a necessary complement to this first treatise (on the incarnate Word).* (Prooemium Tractatus de Ecclesia, p. 19) «Quod si requirat quispiam, qua de causa factum sit ut apud veteres scholasticos ejusmodi disputationis ordo non servetur, imo de Christi Ecclesia specialis tractatio non occurrat, respondeo causam partim ex natura rei, et partim ex peculiaribus temporum circumstantiis esse desumendam.» *And if someone were to ask why, among the ancient scholastics, the order of this question was not preserved and, what is more, why there lacked a special discussion on the Church of Christ, I would answer that this is due partly to the nature of the thing, and partly to the particular circumstances of the time.* (ibidem, p. 20) Consequently, while we will not quote from all the texts, in the works of Saint Thomas, which discuss the Church in particular, we shall nevertheless compare all the important texts with each other and, through our synthesis of these texts, we will be able to understand the holy Doctor's thought on the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ.

81. As Saint Thomas did not write a treatise on the Church as such, it is necessary to bring to the texts of the Angelic Doctor a certain complement, composed of all that the Holy Spirit has taught the Church since Pentecost. So, as an introduction, let us quote a beautiful text from the Council of Vatican II: *The priest alone can complete the building up of the Body in the eucharistic sacrifice. Thus are fulfilled the words of God, spoken through His prophet: From the rising of the sun until the going down thereof my name is great among the gentiles, and in every place a clean oblation is sacrificed and offered up in my name. (Mal. 1:11) In this way the Church both prays and labors in order that the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ, the Head of all, all honor and glory may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the Universe.* (Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 17) From this text, we see that two sacraments contribute to the building up of the Mystical Body: Holy Orders and the Eucharist. This is what the Council of Trent had already taught, though in a way that was a little less clear, that is, by seeing the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ only in the remission of the venial sins committed, day by day, by the faithful: «In Coena novissima, qua nocte tradebatur (1 Co. 11, 13), ut dilectae sponsae suae Ecclesiae visibile (sicut hominum natura exigit) relinqueret sacrificium (...) quo (Sacrificii Crucis) salutaris virtus in remissionem eorum, quae a nobis quotidie committuntur, peccatorum applicaretur: sacerdotem secundum ordinem Melchisedech se in aeternum (Ps. 109, 4) constitutum declarans, (Deus et Dominus noster) corpus et sanguinem suum sub speciebus panis et vini Deo Patri Christus obtulit ac sub earundem rerum symbolis Apostolis (quos tunc Novi Testamenti sacerdotes constituebat), ut sumerent, tradidit, et eisdem eorumque in sacerdotio

successoribus, ut offerent, praecepit per haec verba: *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*, etc. (Lc. 22, 19; 1 Co. 11, 24), uti semper catholica Ecclesia intellexit et docuit.» (Session XXII, ch. 1, in Denzinger, no. 1740) *At the Last Supper, on the night he was delivered up, (our Lord and God) wanted to leave to the Church, his beloved spouse, a visible sacrifice, as human nature requires,... (a sacrifice) whose salutary virtue would apply to the redemption of the sins we commit each day. Declaring that he was constituted a priest of the order of Melchizedek of all eternity (Ps. 109:4), he offered to God the Father his body and blood under the species of bread and wine and, under these same signs, he distributed them to the Apostles for them to eat, and he then established these Apostles as priests of the New Testament; to them and to their successors in the priesthood, he gave the order to offer them with these words: Do this in memory of me (Lk. 22:19), as the Church has always understood and taught. (Council of Trent, Session XXII, Ch. 1, in Dumeige, no. 766)*

82. Thus, the first important thing to note is that it is the sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist which are directed to the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae». However, it is the Eucharist which is the sacrament that principally contributes toward this common end, and the sacrament of Holy Orders is at the service of the Eucharist: *I reaffirm the close bond between the priest and the Eucharist, as the Church teaches us, and I reaffirm with conviction, and also with an intimate joy of the soul, that the priest is above all the man of the Eucharist: the servant and the minister of Christ in this sacrament, in which – according to the Council, which summarizes the doctrine of the early Fathers and Doctors – is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church (Presbyterorum ordinis, no. 5); each priest is the servant and minister of the Paschal mystery accomplished on the cross and relived on the altar for the redemption of the world, at every level, in every part of his work. (H.H. Pope John Paul II, Address of May 12, 1993) Saint Thomas Aquinas briefly expressed this as follows: «Ordinatur omnis ordo ad Eucharistiae sacramentum.» *The sacrament of Order, in all its degrees, was instituted for the sacrament of the Eucharist. (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. IIIae, q. 40, a. 5, corp.)**

83. If we go back to the origin of these two sacraments, we see that Holy Orders and the Eucharist were instituted by the Lord when he pronounced these words: «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem» *Do this in memory of me.* (Lk. 22:19) This flows from the fact that, by these words, Christ taught us the means by which the sacrament of the Church is realized and built up. Indeed, Saint Paul, who cites these words of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24–25), explains them very clearly: *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* (1 Cor. 11:26) Thus, the Lord's command: «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem» is nothing other than the command to *proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* The Council of Trent, moreover, teaches us the same parallel: «Salvator noster, discessurus ex hoc mundo ad Patrem, sacramentum hoc instituit (...), et in illius sumptione colere nos sui memoriam (1 Cor. 11:24) praecepit suamque annuntiare mortem, donec ipse ad iudicandum mundum veniat (cf. Cor. 1:26).» (Session XIII, ch. 2, in Denzinger, no. 1638) *Our Savior, when he was about to leave this world to go to his Father, instituted this sacrament... (and) he ordered us, when we received it, to celebrate his memory and to proclaim his death until he returns in person to judge the world. (1 Cor. 11:24,26) (Council of Trent, Session XIII, Ch. 2, in Dumeige,*

no. 737) In accordance with Christ's command, we must therefore *proclaim his death*: in other words, we must proclaim our faith in the mission that Christ received from his Father, the mission of manifesting the love of God for men, this love being so great that the very Son of God died on the Cross out of love for all sinners: *He loved me and gave himself for me*, Saint Paul said (Ga. 2:20). Now, to proclaim our faith in the mission of Christ is to proclaim that we are Christ's faithful, according to what the Lord said to his Father about the Apostles: *They recognized it for truth that I came from thee, and believed that you did send me*. (Jn. 17:8) *To proclaim the Lord's death* is thus to proclaim that we are Christ's faithful: the Church.

84. But as we are dealing here with a sacramental action, namely communion with the Body and Blood of Christ (see no. 83, where we cite the Council of Trent), when we proclaim that we are the Church, we realize what we proclaim; and thus, truly, the Church builds herself. By these words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem», Christ thus taught us the command and the means for the building up of the Church. One must however specify that, these words having been addressed only to the Apostles, the Church builds herself up through the communion of the bishop, the successor of the Apostles, or through the communion of the priest in union with his bishop; for Christ had given to the Apostles alone the order to proclaim his mission to the entire world: *Christ, whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world*, (Jn. 10:36), *has through His apostles, made their successors, the bishops, partakers of His consecration and His mission*. (Council of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 28) Thus, during Eucharistic celebration, the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» realizes itself and builds itself up through the communion of the celebrant with the Body and the Blood of Christ (see no. 47): «Unitas corporis mystici est fructus corporis veri percepti.» *The unity of the Mystical Body (of Christ) is the fruit produced by the reception of his true body*. (Saint Thomas, *SummaTheologica*, IIIa, q. 82, a. 9, ad 2)

85. In order to discover the entire theological meaning of the words «Hoc facite...», let us place them in their historical context. The words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem» were spoken by Christ among the many words and acts of the institution of the Eucharist; now, with respect to the species of bread, the Lord performed three distinct actions, which are well-described in the synoptic gospels:

– Lk. 22:19,  
«accepto pane gratias egit  
et fregit  
et dedit eis»  
*He took bread, and gave thanks  
and broke it  
and gave it to them.*

– Mt. 26:26,  
«accepit Jesus panem et benedixit  
ac fregit  
deditque discipulis suis»  
*Jesus took bread, and blessed,  
and broke it,  
and gave it to his disciples.*



It is clear that Christ first consecrated the bread («gratias egit», «benedixit») before giving it to his disciples; the same is true for the breaking of the bread, which is placed, in the liturgy, after the consecration and before communion. One must then read directly: «accepto pane gratias egit..., dicens: Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis datur: hoc facite in meam commemorationem» *He took some bread and gave thanks,... saying: This is my body, given for you: do this in memory of me.* (Lk. 22:19)

86. With respect to the species of wine, Scripture recounts only two actions of the Lord; but Tradition has transmitted to us a third, parallel to the three actions relating to the bread:

– in St. Luke: verse 20 seems to need to explain and develop itself through verse 17: «accepto calice gratias egit... accipite et dividite inter vos»  
*He took a cup, gave thanks (and said): Take this and share it among you.* (Lk. 22:17)

– in St. Matthew:  
«accipiens calicem gratias egit et dedit illis»  
*He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them.* (Mt. 26:27)

– in Tradition: «Monet deinde sancta Synodus, praeceptum esse ab Ecclesia sacerdotibus, ut aquam vino in calice offerendo miscerent, tum quod Christum Dominum ita fecisse credatur...» (Council of Trent, Session XXII, ch. 7, in Denzinger, no. 1748) *The Holy Council notes... that the Church has prescribed to priests to mix some water, in the chalice, with the wine that will be offered... because it is believed that Christ our Lord did likewise...* (Council of Trent, Session XXII, Ch. 7, in Dumeige, no. 773)

Our conclusion is the same as for the consecration of the bread: all we need to do is to read it directly: «Similiter (= accepto calice gratias egit) et calicem... dicens: Hic est calix novum testamentum in sanguine meo, qui pro vobis fundetur.» *Likewise, he took the cup (= He took a cup, gave thanks (Lk. 22:17) )... saying: This is the cup of the new testament, in my blood which is to be shed for you... (Lk. 22:20)* Saint Paul adds: «Hoc facite quotiescumque bibetis in meam commemorationem.» *Whenever you drink it, do this for a commemoration of me.* (1 Cor. 11:25) This is even more evident in Saint Mark, where the words of the consecration of the wine are related after they all drank. It is thus clear that they have reference to «gratias agens» (Mk. 14:23–24).

87. In our analysis of the historical facts of the Last Supper, we have established the existence of three distinct actions of the Lord: the consecration of the bread and wine, the breaking of the bread and the mixing of some water into the wine, and the communion with the Body and the Blood of Christ. Also, it is among these three actions that we must place the words of the Lord «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem», in order to understand their entire meaning and theological value. But it is truly only between two actions – that of the consecration of the bread

and wine, and that of the communion in the Body and the Blood of Christ – that we must situate the words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem» in order to find their full meaning, for, to the extent that these same words are understood to be those which are at the origin of the two sacraments of Holy Orders and of the Eucharist (see no. 83), the actions of breaking the bread and of mixing some water into the wine, which cannot be considered essential to the celebration of the Eucharist (as we shall see), have only an indirect – to the exclusion of any direct mode – relation to the words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem».

88. Saint Thomas teaches us clearly that, although it is double according to the species under which it exists, the sacrament of the Eucharist is whole in itself when considered, as it must be, according to the two species: «Hoc sacramentum multa quidem est materialiter, sed unum formaliter, et perfective.» *If this sacrament is plural in its material aspect, it is one in form and perfection.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 73, a. 2, corp.) This argument by Saint Thomas thus obliges us to believe and think that the liturgical rite of the breaking of the bread, in order for it to be, in some manner, essential to the celebration of the Eucharist, must necessarily relate to the two sacramental species – the bread and wine – together and simultaneously. Now, this is indeed the case, since the species of the bread is broken into several pieces before communion, and the species of the wine is partly denatured and broken by the addition of a certain amount of water at the offertory of the Mass (see no. 37 and 38). All of this would lead one to think that the breaking of the bread may in fact be essential to the celebration of the Eucharist. However, this is not the case. Indeed, even when it is considered according to the relation of the unicity of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the liturgical rite of fraction remains fundamentally double in itself. For, while the breaking of the bread is truly a sacramental action, since it consists in the breaking of the consecrated Host, on the other hand, with regard to the mixture of water into the wine, it is in fact still wine, and not the Blood of Christ, that is cut or broken by means of the material element of water. The liturgical rite of fraction is thus always double: sacramental and non-sacramental. Consequently, neither the breaking of the bread, nor the mixture of water into the wine, may be regarded as an essential action of the Eucharistic celebration.

89. On this subject, we shall cite the following texts by Saint Thomas. The first concerns the breaking of the bread; in order to understand it properly, one must keep in mind the principle according to which all that relates to the Mystical Body of Christ does not necessarily relate to the Eucharist, since, in the Church – the Body of Christ – there exist members who possess the grace of God solely by means of faith, to the exclusion of the sacramental mode. Here this first text: «Dicendum est quod fractio hostiae consecratae, et quod una sola pars mittatur in calicem, respicit corpus mysticum; sicut admixtio quae significat populum, et ideo horum praetermissio non facit imperfectionem sacrificii, ut propter hoc sit necesse aliquid reiterare circa celebrationem hujus sacramenti» *It must be said that we break the consecrated host and place only part of it in the chalice in order to signify the Mystical Body, just as we add water to signify the people. This is why the omission of these things does not render the sacrifice imperfect, and consequently such an omission does not require the repetition of any part of the celebration of this sacrament.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 83, a. 6, ad 6) The second text speaks of the water that is mixed with the wine during the offertory of the Mass: «Si vero post consecrationis

verba perceperit, quod aqua desit, debet nihilominus procedere, quia impositio aquae, ut supra dictum est (q. 74, a. 7), non est de necessitate sacramenti (...) Nullo autem modo debet aqua vino jam consecrato misceri, quia sequeretur corruptio sacramenti pro aliqua parte, ut supra dictum est (q. 77, a. 8).» *If, after these words of the consecration, the priest notices that there is no water, he must nevertheless proceed, because, as we have said (q. 74, a. 7), the addition of water is not necessary for the validity of the sacrament (...) One may never add water to the wine after it is consecrated, because it would result in a partial alteration of the sacrament, as we have already observed (q. 77, a. 8).* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 83, a. 6, ad 4)

90. Thus, it is absolutely clear that the actions of the breaking of the bread and of the mixture of water into the wine must be regarded as non-essential elements of the Eucharistic celebration. Now, as it clearly cannot be that the Lord Jesus, at the Last Supper, did anything useless and vain, then if the actions of the breaking of the bread and of the mixture of water into the wine are not essential to the celebration of the Eucharist, they must nevertheless be regarded as being of great importance. One might even say that, with regard to the Eucharistic celebration, they constitute its superabundance, and that, in this way, they are that through which this same Eucharistic celebration can be considered in its most mysterious profundity and in its quasi-inaccessible sublimity. Moreover, the superabundance we have just mentioned finds its entire expression in the relation that exists between the liturgical act of the breaking of the bread (which includes in itself the mixture of water into the wine) and the prayer of epiclesis, a relation which we have already amply established and analyzed (see no. 35 and following). But what is especially important to note here is that, in virtue of this same relation between the fraction and the epiclesis, if the Lord, in instituting the celebration of the Eucharist, broke the bread and mixed water into the wine, he did so in order to signify (with respect to the fraction, which is of the order of signs) the importance, and even the essential character, of the prayer of epiclesis. Consequently, the three actions carried out by the Lord at the Last Supper can be reduced to the following two: the consecration of the bread and wine into his Body and Blood, and the communion of the two Eucharistic species, a communion understood both according to its spiritual aspect (through the prayer of epiclesis) and according to its material and corporeal aspect (through communion itself, by way of eating).

91. Ultimately, the analysis of the historical facts of the Last Supper allows us to note that the words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem» are spoken between the consecration and communion, just as they are in the Eucharistic celebration of the Church. More precisely, these words are recited after the consecration, and before the anamnesis or memorial of the Church, which is nothing other than a preparation for sacramental communion, or quite simply a spiritual communion. Thus, these words split the Eucharistic celebration into two parts, or two proper actions; this is why Saint Thomas tells us: «In missa duo est considerare, scilicet ipsum sacramentum, quod est principale; et orationes, quae in missa fiunt pro vivis, et mortuis» *Two things are to be considered in the Mass: the sacrament itself, which is the most important, and the prayers said at Mass for the living and the dead.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 82, a. 6, corp.) These words thus constitute the key to the Eucharistic celebration, a key that must be turned in both directions, to the left and to the right. But as we have seen that, through these same words «Hoc

facite...», Christ taught us that the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» is built up through communion with his Body and his Blood, we can say that these two actions – namely, the consecration and the anamnesis or Eucharistic prayer – find their conclusion in a common action: sacramental communion.

92. If we continue studying the meaning of the words «Hoc facite...», we shall see that they constitute the key which enables us to better understand the two sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist. Indeed, since these words enable us to understand the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», and since, as we have seen above (see no. 82), these same sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist both contribute to the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», it is clear that these words will take us to the very heart of these two sacraments.

93. Just as the Eucharistic celebration is divided into two parts by the words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem», which serves as a hinge between the two aforementioned parts, in the same way, these same words can be divided into two expressions which are complementary to each other: «Hoc facite» and «in meam commemorationem». Through the words «Hoc facite», Christ conferred Holy Orders upon the Apostles and, by this very fact, passed on to them the power to reactualize his sacrifice, which he had just accomplished through the consecration of the bread and wine into his Body and Blood. But Christ offered himself in sacrifice for the redemption of the world only on the very Command of his Father, in order to accomplish his Will: this sacrificial action being nothing other than the carrying out of a divine Command, the realization of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ can only be accomplished through the divine power of the Holy Spirit operating by means of the sacerdotal character. Indeed, Saint John of Damascus tells us: «Panis et vinum in Corpus et Sanguinem Dei transmutantur. Si requiras quonam pacto id fiat, sat tibi sit audire hoc fieri per Spiritum Sanctum.» *The bread and the wine are changed into God's body and blood. But if you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it was through the Holy Spirit.* (De fide orthodoxa, 4, 13) Thus, the words «Hoc facite» are the expression of an absolutely and exclusively divine action in which the sacrifice of Christ is reactualized under the species of the bread and wine.

94. Through the words «in meam commemorationem», Christ transmitted to the Apostles his personal Command: the Command to remember Him, as he said in his sacerdotal Prayer: *As you sent to me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.* (Jn. 17:18–19) Strictly speaking, *to remember is to have again present to the mind something which belongs to the experienced past* (translation of entry in the Robert Dictionary). So Christ's Command requires one to have present to the mind, once again, the past event of his Sacrifice sacramentally reactualized for us through the consecration of the bread and wine («Hoc facite»). It is an essentially human action, for God cannot fail to remember anything: to God, all is present. This action is realized through prayer, for prayer is the privileged human means that enables us to proclaim our faith in virtue of the redemptive sacrifice of the Cross: *Prayer is a pious elevation of the soul towards God, in order to adore him, to give him thanks for his gifts, to obtain forgiveness for sins and to ask for what is necessary or useful to our neighbor or ourself.* (Catechism of Cardinal Gasparri, p. 172) But this prayer must be a vocal prayer, a proclaimed prayer; this arises from the very notion of

*commemoration*, which is a *ceremony intended to remind one of a person or event* (Robert Dictionary). This is why the Eucharistic Prayer finds its crowning and its conclusion in the elevation of the consecrated species, an elevation accompanied by the doxology *Through Him, with Him, in Him...* In short, through the words *in meam commemorationem*, Christ conferred Holy Orders upon the Apostles, and thus the power to remember, in spirit, his sacrifice – that is, the power of spiritually communicate, through the Prayer of epiclesis, of the sacrament of the Eucharist, whose realization actualizes this same sacrifice. As spiritual communion is accomplished and perfected through sacramental communion, Christ thus also gave the Apostles Holy Orders and the power to sacramentally communicate, expressing in this way the same Command that he gave through the words: *Take and eat... Drink of it, all of you...* (Mt. 26:26–27) But as, through the communion of the priest, the Mystical Body is built up, we can conclude that, through the words «in meam commemorationem», Christ conferred upon the Apostles Holy Orders and the power to build up his Mystical Body, which is the Church. The words «in meam commemorationem» are thus the expression of a properly human action: the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ through Eucharistic communion.

95. With the explanation that we have just given concerning the words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem», we are now able discern two essential aspects – that is, two perfections – in each of the two sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist. First, in the sacrament of Holy Orders: among the Ministers clothed with the sacrament of Holy Orders, we find that two have this sacrament in perfection: the bishop and the priest, although the first possesses it in a more perfect manner than the second: «Sicut omnium rerum naturalium perfectiones praeexistunt exemplariter in Deo, ita Christus fuit exemplar omnium officiorum ecclesiasticorum: unde unusquisque minister Ecclesiae quantum ad aliquid gerit typum Christi (...) Et tamen ille est superior, qui secundum majorem perfectionem Christum repraesentat: sacerdos autem repraesentat Christum in hoc, quod per seipsum aliquod ministerium implevit; sed episcopus in hoc, quod alios ministros instituit, et Ecclesiam fundavit.» *Just as the perfections of all natural things pre-exist, in an exemplary manner, in God, in the same way Christ is the model of all the ecclesiastical functions; so that each minister of the Church bears the image of Christ in a certain way (...) Therefore, such a minister is superior if he represents Christ according to a greater perfection; now, the priest represents Christ in that he accomplished a certain ministry himself, and the bishop in that he instituted other ministers and founded the Church.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. Illae, q. 40, a. 4, ad 3) But as «Ordo est signaculum quoddam Ecclesiae, quo spiritualis potestas traditur ordinato» *Order is a certain seal of the Church by which a spiritual power is transmitted to the ordained (Magister, quoted by Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. Illae, q. 34, a. 2, arg. 1)*, the perfection of the orders of the episcopate and the priesthood depend on the perfection of the proper powers conferred upon each of these two orders. Moreover, we see that the bishop and the priest both have the proper power to realize the sacrament of the Eucharist, but only the bishop has the proper power to build up the Mystical Body of Christ: «Ordinatur omnis ordo ad Eucharistiae sacramentum; unde cum episcopus non habeat potestatem superiorem sacerdote, quantum ad hoc episcopatus non erit ordo; alio modo potest considerari ordo, secundum quod est officium quoddam respectu quarundam actionum sacrarum; et sic cum episcopus habeat potestatem in actionibus hierarchicis respectu corporis mystici supra sacerdotem, episcopatus erit

ordo.» *The sacrament of Order, in all its degrees, was instituted for the sacrament of the Eucharist; it follows that the bishop does not have a power superior to that of the priest, and that, for this reason, the episcopate would not be an order. But one may consider order in another way, that is, as a function relative to certain sacred actions; and thus, as the bishop, in the hierarchical actions concerning the Mystical Body, has a power superior to that of the priest, the episcopate would indeed be an order.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. Illae, q. 40, a. 5, corp.) Consequently, as that which is perfect is necessarily contained within that which is more perfect, we can conclude that the sacrament of Holy Orders in its fullness – that is, the episcopal character – possesses two perfections: the first, which is the power to realize the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, conferred upon the Apostles through these words of Christ: «Hoc facite»; and the second, superior to the first, which is the power to build up the Mystical Body of Christ, conferred upon the Apostles through these other words: «in meam commemorationem».

96. Secondly, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we distinguish two essential elements in the celebration of this sacrament: the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ; and the communion of the priest, both spiritual and sacramental, of the Body and Blood of Christ; these two elements constitute the two perfections of the sacrament of the Eucharist: «Quia tamen ad quamdam perfectionem sacramenti pertinet materiae consecratae usus, sicut operatio non est prima, sed secunda perfectio rei, ideo per omnia ista verba (*Accipite, et comedite*) exprimitur tota perfectio hujus sacramenti: et hoc modo Eusebius intellexit, his verbis confici sacramentum, quantum ad primam, et secundam perfectionem ipsius.» *Because the use of the consecrated matter belongs to a certain perfection of the sacrament, just as operation is not the first but the second perfection of a being, all of these words express the entire perfection of this sacrament. It was thus that Eusebius understood that the sacrament is accomplished with these words, with respect to its first and its second perfection.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Illa, q. 78, a. 1, ad 2) The first perfection of this sacrament is thus the consecration: «Sacramentum Eucharistiae perficitur in ipsa consecratione materiae» *the sacrament of the Eucharist is fully realized in the very consecration of the matter* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Illa, q. 73, a. 1, ad 3); it is what Saint Thomas calls «res, et sacramentum»: «in sacramento Eucharistiae id quod est res, et sacramentum, est in ipsa materia» *in the sacrament of the Eucharist, that which is reality and sign resides in the matter itself* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Illa, q. 73, a. 1, ad 3); it thus consists in the sacramental realization of the Body and Blood of Christ. The second perfection is therefore communion, or the reception of the sacrament; through this action is conferred what Saint Thomas calls «res tantum»: «id autem quod est res tantum, est in suscipiente, scilicet gratia, quae confertur» *that which is reality only, that is, the grace that is conferred, resides in he who receives the Eucharist* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Illa, q. 73, a. 1, ad 3); and Saint Thomas specifies the grace in question: «res hujus sacramenti est unitas corporis mystici» *the reality of this sacrament is the unity of the Mystical Body* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Illa, q. 73, a. 3, corp.); it thus consists in the sacramental building up of the Mystical Body of Christ. But this second perfection is superior to the first, for «Eucharistia non solum est sacramentum, sed etiam sacrificium.» *The Eucharist is not only a sacrament, but also a sacrifice.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Illa, q. 82, a. 4, corp.) Thus, the first perfection, which is the consecration, actualizes the sacrifice of

Christ, which is nothing other than the New Covenant in the Blood of Christ – that is, the Covenant between God and man in Christ crucified. The second perfection, which is communion, extends this same Covenant to other men: it augments it, not in quality, for it remains the same Covenant, but rather in quantity: «Cum ipsum sacramentum realiter sumitur, gratia augeatur, et vita spiritualis perficiatur (...): per hoc sacramentum augetur gratia, et perficitur spiritualia vita, ad hoc quod homo in seipso perfectus existat per conjunctionem ad Deum.» *When the sacrament is truly received, grace is increased and the spiritual life is perfected (...); by this sacrament, grace is increased and the spiritual life is perfected in order that man might be perfect in himself, through union with God.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 79, a. 1, ad 1) In short, through the consecration of the bread and wine, which is the first perfection of the Eucharist, the Covenant in Christ does not undergo any change: it is only actualized, made present. But, on the other hand, through communion with the Body and Blood of Christ, which is the second perfection of the Eucharist, the Covenant in Christ extends to many men («pro vobis et pro multis effundetur» – *It will be shed for you and for all*): it undergoes an increase in quantity; and it is in this sense that this second perfection is superior to the first. Let us be sure to note that this second perfection still involves the communion of the celebrant who «in persona omnium (corpus et) sanguinem offert, et sumit» *offers and consumes (the body and) the blood in the place of all* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 80, a. 12, ad 3).

97. The reader will have noted that, in the preceding (no. 95 and 96), having introduced our interpretation of the words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem» into the reading of the texts of Saint Thomas, we have gone beyond the thought of the Holy Doctor. Indeed, concerning the sacrament of Holy Orders, Saint Thomas does not consider the episcopate to be superior to the priesthood with respect to the Eucharist (cf. Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. IIIae, q. 40, a. 5, corp.), which is contrary to what we have concluded; in the same way, concerning the sacrament of the Eucharist, Saint Thomas says only that the act of Eucharistic communion is *a certain perfection* (cf. Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 78, a. 1, ad 2), while we have shown that the act of communion is superior to the act of consecration. Now, when we say to have gone beyond the thought of Saint Thomas, it would be better to say that we have synthesized it, for we think that Saint Thomas certainly said all there is to say on the Eucharist concerning its relation to the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», but he did not produce a complete and general synthesis of his teaching. This is due to the fact that Saint Thomas did not discuss the mystery of the Church as such in a systematic way. Thus, on the one hand, as the mystery of the Church finds its full and complete expression, with respect to the sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist, in the words «Hoc facite in meam commemorationem»; and on the other hand, as we have just seen that the introduction of these same words into the reading of the texts of Saint Thomas makes it possible to go beyond, or to synthesize, the thought of this same Doctor, it follows that it is indeed the notion of the Church as a mystery or sacrament which enables us to produce a synthesis of Thomist thought on the Eucharist in its relation to the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae».

98. Before continuing with our synthesis, let us summarize what has already been established and concluded to this point by quoting two texts by Saint Thomas, one on the sacrament of Holy Orders, and the other on that of the Eucharist:

§ a – on Holy Orders:

«Sacerdos habet duos actus:

– unum principalem, scilicet consecrare corpus Christi;  
– alterum secundarium, scilicet praeparare populum Dei ad susceptionem hujus sacramenti...

– quantum autem ad primum actum, potestas sacerdotis non dependet ab aliqua superiori potestate, nisi divina;  
– sed quantum ad secundum, dependet ab aliqua superiori potestate, et humana...

Potest (sacerdos) autem consecrare quamlibet materiam a Christo determinatam: nec aliud requiritur, quantum est de necessitate sacramenti, quamvis ex quadam congruitate praesupponatur actus episcopalis in consecratione altaris, et vestium, et hujusmodi...»

*The priest has two acts:*

– one, which is the most important, is that of consecrating the Body of Christ;  
– the other, which is secondary, is that of preparing the people of God to receive this sacrament (of the Eucharist)...

– with respect to the first act, the power of the priest does not depend on any superior authority, apart from the divine authority;  
– but with respect to the second act, the power of the priest depends on a certain superior authority of the human order...

*The priest can consecrate any matter determined by Christ: to do so, he requires nothing other than that which is necessary to the sacrament; however, in virtue of a certain suitability, an episcopal act must be presupposed in the case of the consecration of an altar, of vestments, or of anything else of that kind...*

(Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. Illae, q. 40, a. 4, corp.)

§ b – on the Eucharist:

«In hoc sacramento, sicut in aliis, id quod est sacramentum, est signum ejus, quod est res sacramenti:  
duplex autem est res hujus sacramenti...

– una quidem, quae est significata, et contenta, scilicet ipse Christus;  
– alia autem est significata, et non contenta, scilicet corpus Christi mysticum, quod est societas sanctorum.

Quicumque ergo hoc sacramentum sumit, ex hoc ipso significat se esse Christo unitum, et membris ejus incorporatum, quod quidem fit per fidem formatam...»

*In this sacrament, as in the others, that which is a sacrament is a sign of that which is the reality of the sacrament.  
Now this reality is two-fold...*



- one, which is signified and contained, is Christ himself;
- the other, which is signified and not contained, is the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the society of saints.

*Whoever eats this sacrament signifies by that very fact that he is united to Christ and incorporated into his members. This is the result of informed faith.*

(Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 80, a. 4, corp.)

*[Note: Informed faith is faith in union with charity – that is, faith when it receives its form, and thus its life, from charity. It is faith and charity, in a common hope, which make a man or woman a member of the Mystical Body of Christ.]*

99. Let us now apply the two texts we have just quoted and look at what takes place during the celebration of the Eucharist. «Accepto pane... accepto calice...» The priest takes bread and wine: this is the matter of the Eucharist. It is also what Saint Thomas calls «sacramentum tantum». Over this matter, the priest recites the words of the Institution: he applies the form to the matter. In other words, the priest exercises the power to consecrate which belongs to him in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders he has received. Thus, during the consecration, two sacraments are exercised one upon the other: one sacrament, that of Holy Orders, which, in virtue of divine power, will act (produce an act) upon the other sacrament, the bread and wine («sacramentum tantum») which, in virtue of a determination by Christ himself, have the power to become the Body and Blood of this same Christ. The substance of the bread and the substance of the wine have passed from power to act through the action of an exterior and proportionate agent: the divine power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is the active divine power that the priest possesses through the sacrament of Holy Orders which produced the transubstantiation. The Body and Blood of Christ are thus present under the accidents of the bread and wine: it is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which Saint Thomas calls «res et sacramentum». So, the first and principal act of the priest – the consecration of the Body and Blood of Christ – corresponds to the first reality signified by the sacrament of the Eucharist, that which is «significata, et contenta, scilicet ipse Christus».

100. Once the consecration has been accomplished, the priest continues to exercise the power he possesses in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders. He no longer exercises his power in its first and principal act, but rather in its second act, which is to prepare the People of God for the reception of this sacrament. In other words, the priest will communicate spiritually of the Eucharist, in the name of the entire Church, through the epicletic prayer. Spiritual communion is, in fact, the immediate preparation for the reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist, and this reception completes and perfects the spiritual communion.

101. Here we find, once again, this same action of two sacraments which are exercised one upon the other: one sacrament, that of Holy Orders in its second act, which exercises a simple human power over the other sacrament, that of the Body and Blood of Christ. Sacramental communion, a simple human act, which brings to a close the spiritual communion accomplished through faith in the Blood of expiation (cf. Rm. 3:25), allows the divine power of the Body and Blood of Christ to pass from power to act: the Eucharist has – by means of faith – the virtue and the effective

power of taking away sins and of sealing the new and eternal Covenant with the elect of God. Through communion with the Body and Blood of Christ, the Mystical Body of Christ is built up: the sacramental species become corrupted, the Body and Blood of Christ cease to exist in order to give birth to the Mystical Body of Christ. Thus is realized what we may call «res et sacramentum Ecclesiae».

102. Through sacramental communion, the action of the priest in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders ceases: on the one hand, the species become corrupted and the sacrament of the Eucharist ceases to exist; on the other hand, the sacrament of Holy Orders also ceases to exist in a certain way, for, through communion, what the Church was – through the priest, in virtue of the sacrament – she becomes in reality: a priest like Christ–Priest; for reality drives out what was hidden: the sacramental sign which the priest, representing the Church, possesses. Thus, the second act of the priest, which is to *prepare God's people for the reception of this sacrament*, corresponds to the second reality signified by the sacrament of the Eucharist, that which is «significata, et non contenta, scilicet corpus Christi mysticum».

## Chapter IV

### THE SACRAMENT OF THE CHURCH

#### IN SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

or

#### The Mystery of the Church and of Efficacious grace

#### in a Sacramental Theology

## II

103. Within the framework of our study on the relation between the grace of God and the free will of man, a relation considered in the sacramental theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, we have arrived at our first conclusion, which is that the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» is realized through the communion of the priest with Christ–Eucharist, this communion being both spiritual, through faith, and corporeal, through the eating of the sacrament. In other words, the grace that is the Eucharist encounters the freedom of man in spiritual and sacramental communion with the Body and Blood of Christ. But, since, in the Eucharistic celebration, the priest necessarily acts in the name of the entire Church, the faith which allows him to communicate of Christ–Eucharist is, and must be, the faith of the entire Church. This is what the priest expressly declares in the prayer for peace which precedes communion: *Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church*. Now, the act of faith, because it is a free act, is intrinsically a completely personal act. Thus, the priest, in order to be able to act in the manner described, must, himself, necessarily be the Church, in a way that is properly personal and which fundamentally relates to the notion of faith. By this very fact, as the priest is a minister at the service of another, there absolutely must exist a human person in whose name the priest acts, and whose faith is that of the entire Church. We will therefore look deeper into this notion of faith considered as the faith of the entire Church, in order to be able to then read the texts of Saint Thomas in light of what we will have discovered about this same notion of faith.

104. The sacrament of the Eucharist, realized through the consecration of the bread and wine, possesses a virtue, that of remitting sins: «In Coena novissima... (Christus) relinqueret sacrificium, quo cruentum illud semel in cruce perangendum

repraesentaretur... atque illius salutaris virtus in remissionem eorum, quae a nobis quotidie committuntur, peccatorum applicaretur.» *At the Last Supper, Christ left (to his Church) a sacrifice, through which would be made present that which he accomplished a single time on the Cross... (a sacrifice) whose salutary virtue would apply to the redemption of the sins we commit each day.* (Council of Trent, Session XXII, ch. 1, in Denzinger, no. 1740) Now, this virtue of the Passion of Christ can be applied to us only through faith: «Per fidem applicatur nobis passio Christi ad percipiendum fructum ipsius, secundum illud Rom. 3: *Quem proposuit Deus propitiatorem per fidem in sanguine ejus: fides autem, per quam a peccato mundamur, non est fides informis, quae potest esse etiam cum peccato; sed est fides formata per charitatem: ut sic passio Christi nobis applicetur non solum quantum ad intellectum, sed etiam quantum ad effectum; ut per hunc etiam modum peccata dimittuntur ex virtute passionis Christi.*» *It is by faith that the passion of Christ is applied to us, in order that we might receive its fruits, according to the words of Saint Paul (Rom. 3:25): God set forth Christ to serve as a propitiation through faith in his blood. Now, the faith through which we are purified from sin is not unformed faith, which can subsist even with sin, but rather faith informed by charity; the passion of Christ is thus applied not only with respect to the intellect, but also with respect to the affectivity. And in this manner, it is by virtue of the passion of Christ that sins are remitted.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 49, a. 1, ad 5) Therefore faith is necessarily the human means through which the Church acts upon the sacrament of the Eucharist in the act of spiritual communion, which finds its summit and conclusion in sacramental communion.

105. Saint Thomas tells us: «Potest dicere, quod Fides est habitus mentis, quo inchoatur vita aeterna in nobis, faciens intellectum assentire non apparentibus.» *It can be said that faith is a habit of the mind through which eternal life begins in us, and which makes the intellect adhere to what one does not see.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIa IIae, q. 4, a. 1, corp.) This definition eminently applies to Eucharistic communion accomplished through the intermediary of faith, for the Lord has declared: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.* (Jn. 6:54) Now, in the case of the Eucharist, which is presented to us as a true temporal food, faith is nothing other than an intermediary means («quo» – *whereby*) existing between divine life («vita aeterna» – *eternal life*) and human life («in nobis» – *in us*). Consequently, as life is a simple principle, it follows that faith is an essentially simple intermediary means between divine life and human life. It is in this sense that faith can be called «spirituale contactum», a *spiritual contact* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 48, a. 6, ad 2).

106. Through faith, we perceive the fruits of the Passion of Christ. But, insofar as faith is a «spirituale contactum», through faith we also enter into *contact* or *communion* with the Passion of Christ considered in itself. This means that, through faith, we communicate of the sacrifice of Christ, and that we offer ourselves in sacrifice in union with the sacrifice of Christ. As God manifested his love for us in Christ by offering himself in sacrifice for our sins, this also means that, through faith, we express our love for God, this love being realized through our love for our brothers (cf. 1 Jn. 4:20–21). This is why Saint John tells us: *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* (1 Jn. 3:16) Saint Paul takes up the same idea: *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* (Eph. 5:2)

Lastly, Saint Peter takes care to specify what the fruit of our offering will be, namely the building up of the Church, the spiritual Temple: *Like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* (1 Peter 2:5) From the foregoing, we can conclude that faith is a «spiritualem contactum» through which we can offer ourselves to God in communion with the oblation of Christ, while perceiving, by this very fact, the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Cross which consist in the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ through the remission of sins: faith appears to us truly as the proper sacerdotal power of the Church, a human sacerdotal power.

107. If we consider faith to be a means of receiving from God the fruits of the Passion, we see that, through faith, we receive the remission of sins. But, by this very fact, the Mystical Body of Christ is built up and its unity is perfected: the unity of the faithful depends upon the union of each of the faithful with God, a union which is ever more perfect the more that the faithful are purified from their sins. Moreover, in being built up and in receiving her unification, the Church realizes her mission, which is to manifest to the world the love of the Father who sent his Son for the expiation of sins: *That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* (Jn. 17:21) Therefore, through faith, the Church realizes the mission that Christ gave her: that of revealing to the world love of his Father. But, through faith, we also come into contact with the Passion of Christ, which is nothing other than the realization of the mission given by the Father to his Son. So we see that faith puts the mission given by Christ to the Church into contact with the mission given by the Father to his Son.

108. These two missions differ with respect to the agents who carry them out: Christ, on the one hand, who is the Head of the Mystical Body; and the Church, on the other, being the members of the Mystical Body. Now, they are identical with respect to their nature, for they are united to each other through an essentially simple contact: faith (see no. 105). Consequently, the mission of the Church being considered here is none other than the proper mission of Christ, that which Christ gave to his Apostles and to their successors, the Bishops; indeed, Christ addressed himself to his Father, saying: *As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.* (Jn. 17:18) Thus, faith appears to us as a «spiritualem contactum» through which the Order – that is, the mission – given by the Father of revealing his Love is transmitted from the Head to the members of the Mystical Body of Christ considered in the persons of the Apostles and Bishops.

109. According to the manner in which we have just defined faith, there is no doubt that this same faith considered as a «spiritualem contactum» must have a character of purity and integrity that goes to perfection, in order that the Order of the Father – an essentially divine order addressed to the Son and realized by him – might be transmitted, without any alteration or deformation, from Christ to the Apostles and their successors. Now, faith, insofar as it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, possesses, in all the subjects of faith, the necessary character. But, insofar as faith is also a free response of man, only the faith of the Virgin Mary is a just and pure faith, *an undefiled faith* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 63), for only Mary is immaculate in both her Faith and in her Conception. Thus, we can conclude this analysis of faith by saying that the faith of Mary is the faith of the Apostles and Bishops, and that, by this very fact, the faith of Mary is the faith of the entire Church,

since the entire Church is represented by the Apostles or the Bishops, upon whom this same Church is founded. This is why one can affirm that *the Church is found in Mary, and Mary is in the Church and like the Church* (H.H. Pope John Paul II, Address of December 4, 1991).

110. Faith is the sacerdotal power of the Church, in communion with the Sacrifice of Christ, a power by which the Church obtains the fruits of this same redemptive sacrifice – that is, the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» through the remission of sins. Thus, faith intrinsically possesses an oblatinal and sacrificial character. Consequently, what we have studied (nos. 99 to 102) concerning the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» in the celebration of the Eucharist, basing ourselves solely upon the sacramental aspect of the celebration, shall now be looked at again in light of the sacrificial character of the notion of faith. As, in any sacrifice, there is a priest and a victim, it will thus be necessary for us to examine, in the Eucharistic celebration, of what consist the part of the priest and the part of the victim.

111. With regard to the act of consecration, at first sight, the part of the priest is the sacerdotal character in which the minister of the Church is clothed, and which configures him to Christ–Priest; in the same way, the part of the victim is that which is to be consecrated, that is, the species of the bread and wine. So we have before us three distinct elements: the sacerdotal character, the species of the bread, and the species of the wine; these three elements thus constitute the parts of the priest and of the victim in the sacrifice. But in the specific case of the sacrifice of Christ, the priest and the victim are one: Christ himself. So if we want to know what is the sacrificial notion of the Eucharist in the act of consecration, we must learn what notion simultaneously unites the three elements that we have just named and which come into play in the sacrificial action.

112. We know that, through the sacerdotal character, the priest is configured to Christ. Now, the sacerdotal character is specially directed to the realization of the Eucharist: «Ordo, prout est sacramentum imprimens characterem, ordinatur specialiter ad sacramentum Eucharistiae, in quo ipse Christus continetur, quia per characterem ipsi Christo configuramur.» *Order, inasmuch as it is a sacrament that imprints a character, is especially directed to the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which Christ himself is contained, because, through this character, one is configured to Christ himself.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. IIIae, q. 40, a. 5, ad 2) Moreover, the priest is specially configured to Christ – that is, in an active manner – by the very fact that he pronounces the sacramental words during the consecration of the bread and wine. Therefore, this allows us to say that, when the priest «in consecratione sacramenti loquitur in persona Christi» *in the consecration of the sacrament, [the priest] speaks in the place of Christ* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 82, a. 7, ad 3), the very words the priest pronounces, those by which the sacrament is realized, are nothing other than the externalization in act of the sacerdotal character. Thus, the part of the priest in the sacrificial action of consecration lies in the sacramental words themselves – that is, in the form of the sacrament, the words pronounced by the minister of the Church clothed in the sacerdotal character. Moreover, according to the same relation, the part of the victim lies in the species of the bread and wine – in other words, in the matter of the sacrament. We can thus reduce the shares of the priest and the victim of the

sacrifice to the form and the matter of the sacrament. Our goal will then be to discover what is the notion in the form that simultaneously unites the two species of the matter.

113. The Roman Missal provides us with words used today in the realization of the sacrament of the Eucharist; for the species of the bread: «Hoc est enim Corpus meum, quod pro vobis tradetur.» *This is My Body which will be given up for you.* For the species of the wine: «Hic est enim calix Sanguinis mei novi et aeterni Testamenti, qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.» *This is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.* Of these words, we must reject «Hoc est enim Corpus meum» and «Hic est enim calix Sanguinis mei», each of which relates to a single species only, to the exclusion of the other. The words «quod pro vobis tradetur» are taken from Scripture (verbatim in 1 Cor. 11:24; with the same meaning in Lk. 22:19); as their meaning is comparable to that of the words «qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur», we can look at these two phrases together. In these phrases, the expressions «tradetur» and «effundetur» express the notion of sacrifice well, but each them refers exclusively to but one of the two species; therefore we reject them. In the same way, we cannot take into consideration the words «in remissionem peccatorum», which express the virtue of the sacrifice, and not the sacrifice itself. So, there remain the words «novi et aeterni Testamenti». And, indeed, the notion of the Covenant applies simultaneously to the two species of the bread and wine: to the species of the bread correspond the words «Hoc est Corpus meum» – that is, the Covenant realized at the Incarnation of the Word, according to this scriptural text: *When Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me. (Ps. 39:7) (Heb. 10:5);* to the species of the wine correspond the words «Hic est calix Sanguinis mei...» – that is, the Covenant manifested by the bloody immolation of Calvary, very well explained by the words: *This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. (Lk. 22:20)*

114. From the very instant that the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is accomplished, the Church, through the priest, acts in virtue of the second sacerdotal power, that of faith: just as the sacerdotal character is Christ's proper means of exercising his priesthood, faith is the means proper to the Church – those who believe – for communicating of the sacrifice of Christ, that is, for exercising her own priesthood. Faith is thus the priest's part of the act of communion with the sacrifice of Christ. But, as we have seen that the sacerdotal character is manifested by the recitation of the words of the consecration, the faith of the Church must also, necessarily, be manifested by words; this is accomplished when «sacerdos in missa, in orationibus quidem loquitur in persona Ecclesiae, in cuius unitate consistit» *the priest, in the prayers he pronounces at Mass, speaks in the place of the Church, because he is in unity with her* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 82, a. 7, ad 3); it is through the recitation of the Eucharistic Prayer, in particular through the prayer of epiclesis, that the Church, through the priest, proclaims her faith.

115. We have seen that, in the consecration, the part of the victim is constituted of the species of the bread and wine. Now, through faith, we communicate of the Passion of Christ, we make our own what belongs to Christ. Thus, after the

consecration, the species or appearances of the bread and wine become the part of the victim in the Church's communion with the Sacrifice of Christ. So, as it is truly in communion with the Passion of Christ that one obtains its effects or fruits, Saint Thomas tells us: «Panis et vinum sunt materia conveniens hujus sacramenti... quantum ad effectum respectu totius Ecclesiae, quae constituitur ex diversis fidelibus: *sicut panis conficitur ex diversis granis, et vinum fluit ex diversis uvis*, ut dicit Gloss. (...) super illud 1 Corinth. 10: *Multi unum corpus sumus*, etc.» *Bread and wine are the proper matter of this sacrament... as to the effect of the Eucharist in relation to the entire Church, which is constituted of many believers just as bread is made of many grains and as wine flows from many grapes, according to the Gloss on this passage: As numerous as we are, we form but one body. (1 Cor. 10:17) (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 74, a. 1, corp.)*

116. As, in the sacrifice of Christ, the priest and the victim are one and the same, we must now try to find what simultaneously unites the part of the priest and the part of the victim in the communion with the sacrifice of Christ. Since the part of the priest consists in the Eucharistic prayer, and more precisely, the anamnesis, which is a development of the words «in meam commemorationem», it is thus necessary for us to discern which word, in the anamnesis, simultaneously refers to the two species – the bread and wine – which constitute the part of the victim.

117. In the consecration, the two species of the bread and wine were joined together by the words «novi et aeterni Testamenti», which express the sacrifice and the oblation of Christ to his Father. Thus, it is enough for us to discern which word in the anamnesis expresses the communion with this same oblation. This word is none other than the verb «offerimus». Indeed, Saint Robert Bellarmine explains that «ista oblatio, consecrationem subsequens, est quaedam testificatio, quod tota Ecclesia consentiat in oblationem a Christo factam, et simul cum illo offerat» *The oblation that follows the consecration is a sort of attestation that the whole Church consents in the oblation made by Christ, and offers it along with Him.* (De sacrificio Missae, lib. I, c. 27, quoted by H.H. Pius XII, in Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947, in Denzinger, no. 3851) Now, to consent to the oblation of Christ is the same as uniting oneself to, or communicating of, the oblation of Christ. Thus, through this offering in the anamnesis, the Church communicates of the oblation of Christ. The expression «offerimus» is absolutely essential and constitutes the fundamental element of the Eucharistic Prayer or the spiritual communion of the Church with the Sacrifice of Christ. But as, through faith, the Church communicates of the redeeming Sacrifice, while at the same time receiving the fruits of this same sacrifice, it is also necessary for the Church to express her faith in the virtue of this sacrifice. This is what is accomplished through the prayer of epiclesis, in which the Church asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit with a view to realizing her unity, which is nothing other than the fruit of the sacrifice of the Cross. This invocation immediately follows the anamnesis, just as, in the consecration, the virtue of the sacrifice «in remissionem peccatorum» is expressed after the words «novi et aeterni Testamenti».

118. Through faith, the Church offers herself in sacrifice, in union with the sacrifice of Christ. Thus, each member of the faithful – each person who has faith – can offer himself in sacrifice in spiritual communion. But what is sufficient for each member of the faithful is not sufficient for the priest who celebrates the Eucharist. Indeed, we know that «Oratio, quae fit in missa, potest considerari dupliciter: uno modo,



inquantum habet efficaciam ex devotione sacerdotis orantis (...); alio modo, inquantum oratio in missa profertur a sacerdote in persona totius Ecclesiae, cujus sacerdos est minister.» *The prayer that is said at Mass may be considered from two points of view. On one hand, inasmuch as it draws its efficacy from the devotion of the priest who prays (...) On the other hand, insofar as the prayer is pronounced at Mass by the priest in the place of the entire Church, of which he is the minister.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 82, a. 6, corp.) Therefore the priest acts in virtue of his own faith as well as in virtue of the faith of the Church. It follows that, if it is sufficient for the priest to communicate spiritually in order for him to offer himself, he must necessarily communicate both spiritually and sacramentally in order for the entire Church to offer herself in union with the sacrifice of Christ.

119. We have seen that faith comes into contact with the sacramental species through the recitation of the Eucharistic Prayer, and that the part of the priest and the part of the victim are thus simultaneously united. Now, in any sacrifice, the priest acts as the destroyer of the victim. Thus, faith *destroys* or *eats* the species of the bread and wine in the act of spiritual communion. This is what Saint Thomas calls «spiritualem manducationem, per quam quis percipit effectum hujus sacramenti, quo spiritualiter homo Christo conjungitur per fidem, et charitatem» *spiritual eating through which one receives the effect of this sacrament, which spiritually unites one to Christ through faith and charity* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 80, a. 1, corp.). But the faith utilized by the priest in the celebration of the Eucharist is the faith of the Church, that is, the faith of Mary, *an undefiled faith* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 63), therefore a perfect, just and pure faith. Thus, as the means used by the priest in the *spiritual eating* of the Eucharist is perfect, it follows that this eating itself is perfect. In other words, this eating produces the total and complete destruction of the sacramental species and, in its final phase, this eating leads to perfect contact with the very substance of the sacrament, that is, with Christ himself. Now, contact with the substance of the sacrament is called sacramental communion. In conclusion, we can say that sacramental communion is the completion and the perfection of the spiritual communion accomplished by the priest in the name of the Church through the recitation of the Eucharistic Prayer. Thus, the priest who celebrates the Eucharist must necessarily communicate both spiritually and sacramentally of the two Eucharistic species.

120. Through the faith of Mary, the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» is built up in the Eucharistic communion of the bishop (a priest of the first order), or of the priest (a priest of the second order) in union with his bishop and acting in the name of the latter (see no. 84). Now, we have seen that faith is an essentially simple intermediary means between divine life and human life (see no. 105). Moreover, as life is a simple principle, this same principle of life necessarily relates to the living human person understood in his entirety, both body and soul. Consequently, one can say that faith is nothing other than the expression of the whole human person considered as a living being in its entirety: «*The obedience of faith*» (Rom. 13:26) *is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God.* (Council of Vatican II, Constitution *Dei Verbum*, no. 5) *If it is correct to say that faith consists in believing what God has revealed, the Council very opportunely pointed out that it is also a response of the whole man, underlining the existentialist and personalist dimension of faith.* (H.H. Pope John Paul II, Address of March 27, 1985) By this very fact, in the act of communicating of the Eucharist, that is, in the building

up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», the celebrant, in utilizing the faith of Mary, acts properly in the name of the Mother of God in Christ. But this also means that Mary, through the intermediary and service of the minister of the Church, acts in the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», not in a clear and apparent manner, but rather in a hidden and occult manner. Now, as there is no effect without a cause, and as a cause is proportioned to its effects, it follows that, if we consider, in the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», the action of celebrant – that is, the occult action of Mary – then the sense and the notion of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» will necessarily remain hidden and unknown. On the other hand, if we consider the manifest and proper action of Mary – that is, the Eucharistic communion of Mary by means of her perfect, just and pure faith – then we will be able to discern the whole of the reality of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» and grasp the precise notion which underlies it. We shall do this below.

121. Through her perfect faith, Mary communicates of Christ–Eucharist perfectly and in fullness. This communion is thus necessarily both spiritual and sacramental (see no. 119): Christ–Eucharist is in Mary who is united to him through the contact of her perfect faith. But, by this very fact, the faith of Mary must be considered to be absolutely interior with respect to the very person of Mary, since Christ–Eucharist, the object of Mary’s faith, is, in the act of sacramental communion, necessarily interior with respect to the person of Mary. Moreover, as we had established above (no. 109), the faith of Mary and the faith of the Church are one and the same reality. Lastly, as faith is nothing other than the expression of the entire living human person who believes (no. 120), one may thus say that, by the fact that the faith of Mary is in her, the entire Church is in Mary in a personal manner. In other words, in the person of Mary is each and every person who makes up the Church. As this fact cannot be understood, and surpasses human reason, it follows that Mary cannot be considered as such unless we consider her in the order of mystery: Mary is thus a mystical human person. Finally, as Mary is in a perfect union, through faith, with Christ–Eucharist, Mary is the human person whom we can call the mystical person of Christ (on this subject, refer to what was said in no. 54).

122. Mary, as the Mystical Person of Christ, contains in her person Christ–Eucharist and the Church. Now, Christ is the Head or *the first-born among many brethren* (Rm. 8:29). Thus, in the person of Mary, Christ must be associated, in a mystical way, with the Head of this same person: *He is the head of the body, the church.* (Col. 1:18) According to an identical relation, but taking into account the fact that Christ–Eucharist is properly a person who lives a divine life (see no. 105), and that the Church is properly made up of persons who live a human life, one must associate, in a mystical way, the Church that is in Mary with the Body of this same person, understood in the sense that it consists of all that is not the Head and that is different from it, just as the man or the husband is different from the woman: *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body.* (Eph. 5:23) However, since the Church, as the Mystical Body of Christ, is in the person of Mary, and since a person possesses a stable character insofar as it is considered a person, here one must necessarily consider the Church to be the stable Mystical Body, the Mystical Body as it will be when it completes its *growth* (Eph. 4:16) and when it will have come *to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13). In other words, the Church, in Mary, is, intrinsically, the Mystical Body of Christ in its totality or fullness.

123. What we have just set forth concerning the union of Christ–Head and Christ–Body in Mary is nothing other than the synthesis of Thomist thought on this subject. Indeed, Saint Thomas says: «Caput, et membra sunt quasi una persona mystica.» *The Head and the members are as one mystical person.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 48, a. 2, ad 1) And he develops this expression as follows: «Tota Ecclesia, quae est mysticum corpus Christi, computatur quasi una persona cum suo capite, quod est Christus.» *All the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is considered as a person with its head, which is Christ.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 49, a. 1, corp.)

124. Through her perfect faith, Mary communicates of the Eucharist. Now, faith, as we have seen (no. 106), is the sacerdotal power of the Church in communion with the Sacrifice of Christ. Moreover, faith is properly the expression of the entire human person who believes (no. 120). Thus, insofar as Mary communicates of the Eucharist, Mary offers her entire person in communion with the Sacrifice of Christ: the offering of the entire person of Mary is united to the Sacrifice or the offering of Christ on the Cross. But faith is an essentially simple «spiritualem contactum» (see no. 105). Thus, the offering of the entire person of Mary is united to the offering of Christ in a manner that is absolutely simple and one. By this very fact, the offering or the Sacrifice of the Cross, which is essentially one in itself, is nonetheless composed of the offering of Christ in person and the offering of the entire person of Mary. Now, in sin, whose remission is the proximate end of the redeeming Sacrifice of the Cross, one commonly distinguishes two aspects: «aversio a Deo» *rejection of God* and «conversio ad creaturam» *attachment to creatures*. Moreover, Christ, though he died as a man on the Cross, offers himself in sacrifice to his Father, not as a man, but rather as God, since only the Blood of God made man can redeem the human race, which turned away from God through sin. Consequently, we can say that the redeeming Sacrifice of the Cross has two essential and indissociable aspects, corresponding to the two aspects of sin we have just mentioned: it has a divine aspect in the offering of the person of Christ, the incarnate Word of God, which corresponds to the «aversio a Deo» of sin; and a human aspect in the offering of the human person of Mary, the Mother of God and of Christ, which corresponds to the «conversio ad creaturam» of sin.

125. As the divine aspect of the Sacrifice of the Cross is the sacrificial action accomplished in a personal manner by Christ, and as the human aspect of this same Sacrifice is this same sacrificial action accomplished in just as personal a manner by Mary, we can say that, as the person is intrinsically incommunicable, the two essential aspects of the Sacrifice of the Cross must be understood as two absolutely distinct – though united – parts of this same and unique Sacrifice: a divine part, which is that of Christ, and a human part, which is that of Mary. But, insofar as God is the Creator and man is the creature, the divine part of the Sacrifice of the Cross constitutes its principal and substantial part, and the human part of this same Sacrifice constitutes its secondary and accidental part, or *participation*, properly speaking. Thus we must conclude that the offering of the entire person of Mary in Eucharistic communion carried out by means of her perfect faith is nothing other than participation in Christ's unique and substantial offering of himself on the Cross. As the entire Church is found in Mary, each and every one of the faithful who communicate of the Eucharist can say with Saint Paul: *In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church.* (Col. 1:24)

For his part, Saint Thomas summarizes the entire doctrine of participation in the Sacrifice of Christ in the following way: «In sacerdotio Christi duo possunt considerari; scilicet ipsa oblatio Christi, et participatio ejus: quantum ad ipsam oblationem, expressius figurabat sacerdotium Christi sacerdotium legale per sanguinis effusionem, quam sacerdotium Melchisedech, in quo sanguis non effundebatur; sed quantum ad participationem hujus sacrificii, et ejus effectum, in quo praecipue attenditur excellentia sacerdotii Christi ad sacerdotium legale, expressius praefigurabatur per sacerdotium Melchisedech, qui offerebat panem, et vinum significantia, ut Augustinus dicit (tract. 26 in Joan. a med.): *Ecclesiasticam unitatem, quam constituit participatio sacrificii Christi*; unde etiam in nova lege verum Christi sacrificium communicatur fidelibus sub specie panis, et vini.» *In the priesthood of Christ one may distinguish his oblation and his participation. As to the oblation itself, the priesthood of Christ was more expressly prefigured by the legal priesthood, which shed blood, than by the priesthood of Melchizedek, in which blood was not shed. But as to the participation in this sacrifice and its effect, in which, above all, we see the superiority of the priesthood of Christ over the legal priesthood, it was more expressly prefigured by the priesthood of Melchizedek which offered bread and wine, which, for Saint Augustine (tract. 26 in Joan. a med.), symbolized the unity of the Church, which participation in the sacrifice of Christ constitutes. And this is why, in the new law, the true sacrifice of Christ is communicated to the faithful under the species of bread and wine.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 22, a. 6, ad 2)

126. The entire person of Mary, who communicates of the Eucharist, participates in the redeeming Sacrifice of the Cross. By this very fact, the notion of participation concerns Mary's entire person in its union with the Eucharist, that is, insofar as it is a reality of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae». Thus, we have determined the notion that fully characterizes the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» in the person of Mary and, consequently, all that relates to its building up: it is the participation of the Church in the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Now, as we have seen that Mary, who communicates of the Eucharist through her perfect faith, is properly the human person who may be called *the mystical Person of Christ* (see no. 121), and as this same mystical Person of Christ is made up of Christ–Head, which is the Eucharist, and Christ–Body, which is the Church (see no. 122), it necessarily follows that the notion of participation in the Sacrifice of Christ relates, simultaneously and indissociably, to both the Eucharist and the Church, and this in virtue of the personal character of the very principle uniting the two: namely, the living human person of Mary. It is with a consideration of this that we propose to conclude this study.

127. The Eucharistic celebration is entirely directed to the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» (cf. no. 84). Now, the Eucharistic celebration can be broken down into two distinct actions – consecration, and spiritual communion or Eucharistic anamnesis – which find their conclusion in a common action: sacramental communion, through which is built up the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» (see no. 89). Moreover, after having analyzed these two actions in detail, first from a strictly sacramental point of view (no. 99 to 102), and then from the fuller and more general perspective of the Sacrifice or offering (no. 110 to 119), we have established that the notion of participation relates, in an essential manner, to the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» considered in its reality in the very person of Mary, the Mother of God and the Mother of Christ, who for this reason is called the mystical Person of Christ

(no. 120 to 126). Consequently, to summarize our study, it will be necessary to consider each of the two actions of the Eucharistic celebration according to the proper and exclusive relation of the participation of the Church in the redeeming Sacrifice of the Cross realized *once and for all* (Heb. 9:12).

128. The notion of participation intrinsically concerns the Church in her communion with the Sacrifice of Christ (see no. 125), and it concerns the Church in her properly personal dimension (see no. 126). This means that, insofar as we consider the Eucharistic celebration from the point of view of participation, we should view and consider this same celebration as a proper and exclusive action of the Church in the person of the celebrant. Now, in the first action, which is the consecration, the celebrant, using his divine sacerdotal power, which is the sacerdotal character, is conscious, not of acting in the name of Church, but rather of acting in the name of Christ, since this same sacerdotal character used by him is a power which intrinsically resides in the single faculty of the intellect: «Character ordinatur ad ea, quae sunt divini cultus; qui quidem est quaedam fidei protestatio per exteriora signa; et ideo oportet, quod character sit in cognitiva potentia animae, in qua est fides.» *A character is directed to divine worship, which is a protestation of faith through exterior signs. So it is necessary for a character to be in that cognitive power of the soul in which faith resides.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 63, a. 4, ad. 3) However, as the celebrant truly pronounces the words of the consecration, he nonetheless acts, in a certain way, in the name of the Church, but only in the proper manner of an instrument: «Ministri Ecclesiae instrumentaliter operantur in sacramentis, eo quod quodammodo eadem ratio est ministri, et instrumenti; sicut autem supra dictum est (q. 62, a.1 et 4), instrumentum non agit secundum propriam formam, aut virtutem, sed secundum virtutem ejus, a quo movetur.» *The ministers of the Church act instrumentally in the sacraments, for, in a way, the definition of minister is the same as that of instrument. Now, as we have seen, the instrument does not act according to its form or its own virtue, but according to a virtue belonging to the one who moves it.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 64, a. 5, corp.) Thus, in the act of the consecration, the celebrant, though acting in the name of Christ himself, also acts, in some respect, in the name of the Church: he does «quod facit Ecclesia» *what the Church does* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 64, a. 8, ad 3). In other words, the act of consecration is but a kind of participation of the Church in the Sacrifice of Christ, and not a participation understood in its full and complete sense. This is why, as the words of the consecration are the actual exteriorization of the sacerdotal character (see no. 112), Saint Thomas affirms that this same sacerdotal character «est quaedam participatio sacerdotii Christi in fidelibus ejus» *is a certain participation in the priesthood of Christ by his faithful* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 63, a. 5, corp.). In short, it is certain that, in the act of consecration, Christ offers himself to his Father through the Church, with the Church, and in the Church: «[Christus] novum instituit Pascha, se ipsum ab Ecclesia per sacerdotes sub signis visibilibus immolandum in memoriam transitus sui ex hoc mundo ad Patrem» *Christ instituted the New Passover in order to be immolated by the Church, by the priests, under visible signs, in memory of his passage from this world to his Father* (Council of Trent, Session XXII, Ch. 1, in Denzinger, no. 1741); and, in this sense, one can say that the Church offers the sacrifice of Christ in the very act of the consecration: it is a kind of participation of the Church in the sacrifice of Christ.

129. In the second action of the Eucharistic celebration, that is, in the act of spiritual communion expressed through the Eucharistic Prayer, the celebrant, utilizing the sacerdotal power of the faith of Mary, truly and fully acts in the name of the Church: in this action, the participation of the Church in the Sacrifice of Christ finds its realization in its full and complete sense (see no. 124 to 126). As sacramental communion is nothing other than the crowning and the completion of spiritual communion (see no. 119), it is properly the action of sacramental communion that realizes the full and complete participation of the Church in the redeeming Sacrifice offered by this same Church in the act of consecration: «Quicumque sacrificium offert, debet sacrificii fieri particeps, quia exterius sacrificium, quod offertur, signum est interioris sacrificii, quo quis seipsum offert Deo, ut Augustinus dicit 10. De Civitate Dei (cap. 5); unde per hoc quod participat sacrificio, ostendit ad se sacrificium interius pertinere (...) Ideo necesse est, quod sacerdos, quotiescumque consecrat, sumat integre hoc sacramentum.» *Whoever offers the sacrifice must become a participant in it; for the sacrifice one offers exteriorly is a sign of the interior sacrifice through which one offers oneself to God, as Saint Augustine says; so, by the very fact that one participates in the sacrifice, one shows that one associates oneself to the interior sacrifice; (...) this is why it is necessary for the priest, each time that he consecrates, to consume this sacrament in its integrity.* (Saint Thomas, IIIa, q. 82, a. 4, corp.) Lastly, as the act of consecration is but a kind of participation of the Church in the Sacrifice of Christ, and as the act of communion is the participation of the Church – understood in the full and complete sense – in this same Sacrifice, it follows that the act of communion is necessarily superior to the act of consecration. By this very fact, as the realization of the Eucharist in the consecration is the first perfection of this sacrament, one can say that the act of Eucharistic communion, which is the second or other perfection of this same sacrament, is a more perfect act than the act of consecration, as we had already previously shown (see no. 96). Thus, from all this, we can deduce that the act of communion, in which the Church offers herself to God in Christ, is an act that is superior to the act of consecration, in which the Church offers Christ in his sacrifice to the Father. This is what Saint Thomas confirms when he says: «In quantum est sacrificium, (Eucharistia) habet vim satisfactivam: sed in satisfactione magis attenditur affectus offerentis, quam quantitas oblationis: unde et Dominus dicit Luc. 21, de vidua, quae obtulit duo aera, quod *plus omnibus misit*. Quamvis ergo haec oblatio ex sui quantitate sufficiat ad satisfaciendum pro omni poena, tamen fit satisfactoria illis, pro quibus offertur, vel etiam offerentibus secundum quantitatem suae devotionis, et non pro tota poena.» *Inasmuch as it is a sacrifice, the Eucharist has a satisfactory power. But in satisfaction, the intent of the one who offers it is more important than the quantity of the oblation. So says the Lord in St. Luke (21:4), speaking of the widow who had offered two small coins: she had given more than everyone. So, while the oblation of the Eucharist, as to its quantity, is sufficient to satisfy for all the punishment, it however has a satisfactory value for those for whom it is offered, or even for those who offer it, according to the quantity of their devotion, and not for all the punishment.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 79, a. 5, corp.) Now, the word «devotio» properly signifies *devotion*, that is, a *gift of self*, and thus, in a certain sense, *sacrifice*. Thus, God weighs the quantity of the sacrifice of the offerer himself rather than the quantity and quality of the oblation.

130. In virtue of our consideration of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae» from the point of view of the participation of the Church in the Sacrifice of Christ, we have established

that, while consecration and communion are two perfections of the Eucharist, communion is more perfect than consecration. As these two actions – consecration and communion – both contribute to the realization of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», we can say that the essence of the building up of the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», or in other words the essence of the Eucharistic celebration, consists in both the consecration of the bread and wine, and the communion of the celebrant under the two sacramental species, a communion that is both spiritual – through the Eucharistic Prayer – and sacramental. Thus, this means that the essential act which concludes the Eucharistic celebration, namely the sacramental communion of the priest or celebrant, is the act through which the «sacramentum Ecclesiae», which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is built up. But, as the sacrament of Holy Orders is a «signaculum quoddam Ecclesiae» *a certain seal of the Church* (Magister quoted by Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, Supp. Illae, q. 34, a. 2, arg. 1 – see also no. 95), it follows that, through the communion of the priest, that which had existed, in the priest, only *in a certain manner* (in virtue of the word «quoddam» *a certain...*) – that is, the Church – becomes a reality: the sacrament of Holy Orders (understood in its fullness, with respect to the act of communion) ceases, in some sense, to exist; that which was but a sacrament becomes a reality. By this very fact, through the communion of the priest, the action of the sacrament of Holy Orders ceases, and it will be exercised again only through the essential act which begins the celebration of the Eucharist, that is, through the consecration.

131. Similarly, considering that consecration is a kind of participation of the Church in the Sacrifice of Christ, and that communion is a participation – understood in its full and complete sense – of the Church in this same Sacrifice; and considering that, by this very fact, the whole of notion of the Eucharist as sacrifice can be found in this same notion of participation, we can provide the following definition:

*The Eucharistic celebration is the participation of the Church in the redeeming Sacrifice of the new and eternal Covenant which Christ offers to his Father in the consecration of the bread into his Body and the wine into his Blood, a participation which finds its accomplishment in the Eucharistic memorial and in the prayer of epiclesis, its summit in the final doxology accompanied by the elevation, and its conclusion in the sacramental communion of the celebrant under the two species, in order that, through the latter, the Church might receive the communication of the Holy Spirit with a view to the building up of her unity through the remission of sins.*

132. If we prefer a shorter definition, we can also say:

*The Eucharistic celebration is the participation of the Church, in spirit and in truth, in the redeeming Sacrifice of the new and eternal Covenant offered by Christ to his Father under the species of the bread and wine, a participation which is accomplished in spirit in the Eucharistic Prayer, and in truth in the communion of the celebrant.*

133. To conclude our study of the essential elements of the Eucharistic celebration – that is, the study of those elements that permit, in the world of the sacraments, the union of the grace of God and the free will of man – we would like to confront our own personal deduction, drawn from the texts of Saint Thomas, with the Magisterium of the Church as well as with the Tradition of which this same Magisterium is the

interpreter and guardian. So, first, concerning the teaching of the Church concerning the Eucharist, we shall cite the following clear and profound statement by His Holiness Pope John Paul II: *The Eucharist is the summit of the entire Christian life, for the faithful bring to it all their prayers and their good deeds, their joys and their sufferings, and these humble offerings are united with the perfect oblation of Christ and are thus fully sanctified and lifted up to God in a perfectly pleasing worship, one which introduces the faithful into the intimacy of God (cf. Jn. 6:56–57). This is why, as Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote, the Eucharist is the consummation of the spiritual life, and the end of all the sacraments (Illa, q. 73, a. 3, corp.). The Eucharist requires the participation of the members of the Church... This participation is common to the entire priestly people, allowed to become united in the oblation and in communion. But it differs according to the condition in which the members of the Church find themselves with respect to the sacramental institution... The purpose of the sacerdotal ministry is the convocation of the people of God so that all belonging to this people, since they have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, can offer themselves as «a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God» (Rm. 12:1) (Council of Vatican II, Presbyterorum Ordinis, no. 2). If, as I had underlined in previous catecheses, the common priesthood is ordered to the offering of spiritual sacrifices, the faithful are able to make this offering because they are sanctified through the Holy Spirit (ut supra). The Holy Spirit, who animated the offering of Christ on the cross (cf. Heb. 9:14), animates the offering of the faithful. Once the offering is made, the Eucharistic communion that follows is ordered to providing the faithful with the spiritual strength necessary for the full development of the priesthood, and especially for the offering of all the sacrifices of their daily existence. Priests – as we read in the decree «Presbyterorum Ordinis» – must instruct their people to offer to God the Father the Divine Victim in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives. (no. 5) One may say that according to the intention of Jesus, who formulated the new commandment of love at the Last Supper, Eucharistic communion renders those who take part in it capable of putting this commandment into practice: Love one another as I have loved you. (Jn. 13:34, 15:12) (Address of April 8, 1992)*

134. Second, concerning the Tradition of the Church, that is, concerning the fundamental teaching that the Apostles received from Christ in order to transmit it to the Church until the end of time, we find, consigned to Holy Scripture, the most ancient name, and thus the proper signification, that the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, gave the celebration of the Eucharist, and this name is *the breaking of the bread* (Acts 2:42), that is, the action accomplished by Christ himself, at the Last Supper, between the consecration and communion, an action which finds its correlative in the admixture of water to the wine before the consecration (see no. 85 and 86). Thus, as faith, through which the Church participates in the Sacrifice of Christ, is the element which *destroys* or which *eats* the Eucharistic species or accidents (see no. 119), it is clear that the participation of the Church in the Sacrifice of Christ in Eucharistic communion is nothing other than that action in which Eucharist is broken, that is, the *Action* par excellence, that which, as we have just mentioned, the earliest of Christ's faithful called *the breaking of the bread* (Acts 2:42). Consequently, we can summarize the action of the priest in the celebration of the Eucharist by saying that, first, in the act of consecration, the priest makes use of his divine power, which *destroys* the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine, in order that the substance of Christ might appear, veiled by the accidents of the bread and wine; and second, in the act of spiritual communion, he makes use



of his human power, which *destroys* the accidents of the bread and the accidents of the wine, in order that there might appear, unveiled, the substance of Christ; so that, in sacramental communion, the priest, in the name of the Church, might be capable of uniting himself to this same substance of Christ, in order that the Church might be but one with Christ, and that the Mystical Body of Christ might thus be, to a greater extent, one in Mary, the mystical Person of Christ, for whom, through whom, with whom, and in whom the Church receives the communication of the Holy Spirit who, while resting in fullness upon Christ, preserves and protects in himself all of the spiritual good of the Church, which is the gift of the grace of God in its union with the free will of man: «Bonum commune spirituale totius Ecclesiae continetur substantialiter in ipso Eucharistiae Sacramento.» *The spiritual common good of the entire Church resides substantially in the sacrament of the Eucharist itself.* (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 65, a. 3, ad 1)