The bishop’s care for priests extends to a special concern for the promotion of all vocations, especially to priesthood. In choosing their collaborators in formation, bishops need to make these appointments with a careful eye and with great attention, always giving emphasis to sanctity of life, orthodoxy and pastoral competence. To ensure a correct understanding of the identity of the priest, it is fundamental that correct intellectual, ascetical and doctrinal formation, as well as dutiful and inspired discipline, be assured in seminarians.”

(“Statement of Conclusions”, 16,15,19, in this issue.)
Dear ACCC Members and Associates:

The past months have been ones of celebration for Catholics all over the world. We have marked the 25th anniversary of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II. This occasion has enabled many to reflect on the contribution of this remarkable man who continues to lead us with depths of spiritual insight and energy despite his own weakening state. All members of the ACCC give thanks to God for the Holy Father’s unique and inspiring leadership! At the time of the Pope’s jubilee, he beatified Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. So many of us have had the privilege to either meet Mother Teresa or at least to know much about her. It is therefore a particular grace to now hail her as one of God’s Blessed. May God continue to bless the apostolate of the Missionaries of Charity.

All members of the ACCC extend congratulations to our newly created Cardinal, George Cardinal Pell. I had the privilege of being present in Rome for the celebrations creating the new Cardinals. It was a very proud occasion for the Church of God in Australia. His Holiness has chosen a very worthy man to serve the Church and the Holy See.

I would also like to make mention of a wonderful event which took place in the Archdiocese of Melbourne in October. “The Hearts on Fire” congress was held to encourage vocations to and knowledge of the various ways of life within the Church. Melbourne’s Exhibition Building was taken over by displays of various religious orders, congregations and apostolic groupings from around Australia. Over 10,000 people, including many school children passed through the display that was lively and positive. Young people mixed freely with monks, friars, religious men and women; there was opportunity to ask questions of the various priests and religious who staffed the various stalls. I am certain that many people came away with a very positive message about the life and future of the Catholic Church in Australia. I pray that this great occasion may be a means of sowing the seed of a vocation in many who attended. Congratulations are extended to all involved in this exciting initiative. The ACCC was happy to be involved and had its own stall at this event.

The ACCC had a very successful first conference in Adelaide and is now looking forward to the 2004 conference. We are very happy to announce that this conference will be held in Sydney and that our guest speaker will be the internationally famous Fr Richard John Neuhaus. Fr Neuhaus is a convert Lutheran and is now looking forward to the 2004 conference. We are very grateful to His Eminence, Cardinal Pell for his assistance in expediting this important visit.

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Dear Readers:

It would be really good to be able to publish a cover photograph of Australian seminarians who look like seminarians. As an “interim measure”, the cover shows a cut of a larger photograph of boys looking like “altar boys” (and who act as they look!). I hope that this and the invitation opposite will lead to an article on this “well known assistance in encouraging vocations”!

Preparation of this issue was delayed by a later-than-usual Conference (and the subsequent Inter Nos), and busyness of your parish priest Editor, but was cruelly affected by one of those wickedly vandalistic PC viruses that came through SPAM e-mail. Oh dear! It has occurred to this Editor that such vandals are like those who destruct others’ reputations: with difficulty are they re-built. Let’s constantly pray protection upon our priests in this vandalistic age, and implement our prayers.

Again, I am grateful to those who assisted me in bringing this issue to publication. A website may now be viewed:

http://www.australianaccine.org/

http://www.australianaccine.org/
Noble tradition: altar boys today
Father Paul-Anthony McGavin*

Two successive Cardinal Prefects of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments have spoken of the “noble tradition” to support groups of altar boys in terms of priestly obligation. Nevertheless, considerable difficulties are often faced in contemporary Australia by priests who seek to implement this practice that Cardinal Estrevez in the Jubilee Year described as “of well known assistance in encouraging priestly vocations”. The Editor would like in the next edition of this journal to present an article treating the Training of Altar Boys in the contemporary setting. Readers with experience in this topic are invited to communicate their insights and experience in this important ministerial work.

The cover photograph is from a group of altar boys in the Editor’s parish, and the photograph below was taken in the Editor’s parish church when the priest in the centre returned to celebrate his 25th anniversary of priestly ordination. The boy immediately in front of him is wearing the sanctuary robe discovered and restored by the Editor that was worn by the priest as a boy (the label C. Kirwin is still sewn in the back thereof!). Father McGavin is seen in the right of the photograph (a picture of the Editor not having previously been published!).

* The Congregation documents mentioned here and in the front cover quotes are: Cardinal Ortas, Prot. 2482/93 and Cardinal Estevéz, Prot. 2451/00. The Editor is Parish Priest of Taralga in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. The church has the dedication of Christ the King.
Saint Augustine: Conference Homily

Father Timothy Deeter

This homily delivered on the Memoria of St Augustine of Hippo reflects a familiarity with this Father of the Church that Father Deeter gained during his years as an Augustinian. Father Deeter is now on the staff of the Cathedral in Perth.

Most, if not all of us, would claim some familiarity with St Augustine. He was many things in his life-time: son, brother, lover, father, student, teacher, philosopher, theologian, monk, priest, bishop. I fear, however, that fewer and fewer seminarians and priests actually read Augustine any more – even though he is the most quoted Father and Doctor of the Church in the pages of the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Many claim familiarity with Augustine through his famous Confessions. We pour over these pages, often skipping most of the theological reflections and mystical ruminations, and searching for the “good bits”: his juvenile pranks, his distaste for Greek, his son born out of wedlock, and his famous quote that unfortunately is treated by many jokingly, “O Lord, give me chastity and continence, but not yet!”

Why did he write the Confessions? He of course wrote much more. Today on his feast day – 1573 years after his death – I would like to share a few of his words on the priesthood:

The thirteen books of my Confessions are intended to praise the just and good God in all my evil ways as well as in my good ways, and to stir up toward Him the mind and feelings of men. As far as I am concerned, they had this effect on me when I wrote them, and they still do so when I read them. What others may think is their own business. I know that many of the brethren have enjoyed them, and still do so. (Revisions 2:32).

Clearly, there is nothing easier, more pleasurable, or more sought after than the office of bishop, priest or deacon if this is going to be carried out lightly, amid the billing and cooing of flatterers. But in the eyes of God there is nothing more miserable, more regrettable, or more worthy of condemnation. On the other hand, provided this service is carried out as our Master commands, in the eyes of God there is no greater happiness than to be a bishop, priest or deacon (Letter 21:1).

Proud ministers are reckoned with the devil. But the gift of Christ, which is pure and flows through them, is not thereby contaminated. For the spiritual power of the Sacrament is just like light. It is pure and is received by those who are to be enlightened. Nor does it become less pure even though it passes through unclean ministers (Sermon on John 5:5).

Those to whom is given the gift of celibacy order their will in such a way as to accomplish what they wish. In order, therefore, that this message, which is not received by all men, may yet be received by some, God’s grace and their free will combine in securing to them the gift of celibacy (Grace and Free Will 1:4).

I – whom you see before you as your bishop, by God’s grace – cam to this city as a young man. I did what I could to seek salvation in a humble position rather than be in a danger in high office. But a slave may not contradict his Lord. I came to this city to see a friend. I felt secure, for the place already had a bishop. But I was seized. I was made a priest, and from there I became your bishop (Sermon 355:2).

Believe me, brothers and sisters, if what I am for you frightens me, what I am with you reassures me. For you I am the bishop; with you I am a Christian. “Bishop” is the title of an office one has accepted to discharge. “Christian” is the name of the grace one receives. Dangerous title! Salutary name! (Sermon 340:1).

Augustine is especially attractive because he seems so “modern”, so “contemporary” in his outlook. We have been reminded at this Conference by Bishop Coleridge that the Church has “always been a mess”. Listen to St Augustine:

Bad times! Troublesome times! This is what people are saying. Let our lives be good, and then the times will be good. For it is we who make our own times. Such as we are, such are the times. What can we do? Maybe we cannot convert masses of people to a good life. But let the few who do hear, live well. And let the few who live well endure the many who live badly (Sermon 30:8).

Scattered about the entire earth, your Mother the Church is tormented by the assaults of error. She is also afflicted by the laziness and indifference of so many of the children she carries around in her bosom, as well as by the sight of so many of her members growing cold, while she becomes less able to help her little ones. Who then will give her the necessary help for which she cries out, if not those clerics to whose number you belong? (Letter 243:8).

As we move toward the moment of Eucharistic communion with Our Lord, listen to Augustine’s love for the holy Eucharist:

O Sacrament of love! Sign of our unity! Bond of our Fraternity! All who long for life have here its very Source. Let them come here and believe, unite with You and live. Let them cling to the Body and live for God (Sermon on John 26:11).

And, as we have already been reminded this week, our faith looks to its end, it is eschatological. As the Vandals invaded North Africa and Augustine approached his death in 430, he wrote City of God, a book of hope:

Once we are in heaven, we shall be at rest, and we shall see. We shall see, and we shall love. We shall love, and we shall praise. The end of our desires will be the One Who can be admired without end. Whom we can love without being bored, and Who can be praised without our becoming tired (City of God 22:30).

Let us close with familiar words, again from the Confessions:

You have made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until resting in Thee (Confessions 1:1).
One place on my road to becoming a Bishop in the Church of God

In the short time since I have been a bishop, I have had some wonderful experiences. One that means a lot to me personally was when I had the opportunity to visit England. I spent most of my teenage years there and did five years preparation for Anglican ministry there. Whenever I am in London I love to go back into Westminster Cathedral and it always brings back memories of the days when I had the opportunity to call in there to say a prayer. I’d just sit in the back of the Cathedral – always about in the same spot, three rows from the back – and often when I was there there would be Mass in progress. At that time (the late 1950s) holy Mass was at 10.30 every morning, the choir would be singing, the Canons would be singing the Divine Office first, and Mass would begin straight after that. This formed one of my earliest impressions of Catholicism, and that is the people of God in worship at Mass. One wondered where they came from. The Cathedral always seemed to be full, even on a weekday morning. Ordinary people coming and going, and this liturgy in progress at the altar. Of course, these days there’d be some would say, “Oh well, of course that was the old days. ... It was all in Latin – the priest had his back to the people and the people didn’t really know what was going on, and they were just sort of there saying their prayers while the priest mumbled away at the altar.” That was never my impression as a non-Catholic going to a Catholic Mass. It made the impression on me that something absolutely important was happening. And that’s why the people were there. And that important thing that was happening was up there on the altar with this priest in the distance whose voice you only heard from time to time interspersed with that of the choir. But something was going on there which had a power to touch hearts. It certainly touched mine and looking back, I think that that, amongst other early experiences of Catholicism, started me on the way to the Church.

So Westminster Cathedral has a special place for me and what was almost overwhelming and overcoming was when I was asked to celebrate the 10.30am Mass on a Sunday morning in Westminster Cathedral, and to walk into that building so many years later as a Bishop of the Catholic Church and stand at that altar and in that pulpit and preach to the people – it was very hard to take my glance away from that spot three rows from the back.

Witness to Catholic truth

Westminster Cathedral also has other memories for me. For those of you who’ve been there will know that as you enter from the back, on your left hand side there’s a shrine. The shrine of St John of Southwouth.?? It’s another memorable spot for me because it was looking at that figure in priestly vestments in that glass reliquary that I wondered about what had happened to him. Subsequently I heard that after his terrible death, that Catholics bribed those in charge to take down the quarters and the head from the gate of the city, and they sewed them together and smuggled them out to France where they were lost for quite a while and then turned up again and were brought back and enshrined in Westminster Cathedral. If you pass along that same side aisle, further towards the altar, this is the side of the blessed sacrament chapel, on your left is a great bronze tablet that records the name of every Bishop in communion with the See of Rome since the time of St Augustine of Canterbury at the end of the 6th Century in unbroken order, until you come to another name, Thomas Cranmer, “heretic”. And I never ever forgot the words that were beside his name and are still there. I was brought up to look on Thomas Cranmer as a martyr for conscience, and I must say I’ve come to long since agree with Archbishop [now, Cardinal] Pell in what he said recently that the phrase “the primacy of conscience” should be quietly dropped. Yes, people can follow their conscience, and we may suppose that Cranmer did. And his final moments were quite dramatic as indeed were the final moments in English martyrs, but there’s a difference. One died for the truth, and one died for error. And there’s no getting away from that even as we become more ecumenical and so on. So that always was something that was in my mind, and led me forward and anyway I have now had the opportunity of celebrating Mass there in that great Cathedral.

Witness to the centrality of the Blessed Sacrament

The Cathedral also has another aspect of meaning for me in that it is one of those Catholic cathedrals and churches which has, through the last 40 years, remained visually almost the same. There’s been no breaking-up of altars and removal of altar rails. There’s been none of those routine things that became fashionable in the last 30 years. Indeed, just recently the high altar has indeed been moved, but only just a very small distance to enable episcopal celebration at that same altar that’s been there for well over a century to be used for the celebration of Mass in the westward position. But it can be equally used in the eastward position as well. And so there is something about that building of course like so many others that have survived that speaks of the continuity – the continuity of the eucharistic celebration right through all of these changes. And the other thing is the Blessed Sacrament chapel. It’s one of those cathedrals that from the very beginning always had a Blessed Sacrament chapel. Some people have referred to it as the most “prayed in” spot in London. And I think that might well be true, because you can never go there without large number of people in prayer there before that very beautiful chapel, the altar surrounded by all the mosaics which are now completed. And this also is something that impresses me, because almost in every church now you find the tabernacle has been moved somewhere else. And if it’s moved to a separate chapel where it’s on the central axis and is obviously a place of prayer and devotion, well that’s fine. But often it’s moved just somewhere to the side, and this has had an enormous psychological impact on the devotion of Catholic people towards the blessed Eucharist. And it’s very sad – at least I always feel very sad – when I go to churches and see the Blessed Sacrament
moved over to the side of the sanctuary and where it used
to be – whether on the old high altar, or even when things
were first changed it was placed in the apse or at the east
end of the church – now its place is taken by a vast empty
space or perhaps even by a large bowl of flowers, and
there might even be a sort of a throne-like seat for the
priest. You know, Fathers, what I mean, you know the
vast psychological impact that this has had, and I think
perhaps now the time might be coming to reconsider a
lot of those earlier, and as we see now, more and more
ill-advised moves – and to be quietly just bringing the
Blessed Sacrament back into the centre again, whether
it be of the parish church which has no chapels or other
places, or in the bigger churches where there are decent
side chapels which can be suitably adorned and there
can be plenty of space for adorers to gather, into those
chapels. Anyway, I just make those remarks because as
I’ve been through New South Wales on my last holidays
I’ve travelled to a lot of country towns between my own
diocese and then down into Victoria and it’s extraordinary
what you find in terms of the reservation of the Blessed
Sacrament from decency and appropriateness to, you
could almost say, neglect.

Witness to the sacrament of Penance
And the same can be said I’m afraid also of confessional.
I’ve become something of an expert on the contents of
disused confessional. Every single bit of junk from
children’s liturgies and all sorts of bits and pieces from
Christmas and so on, you can be sure you’ll find them in
the place where for generations people knelt to confess
their sins and priests exercised that great ministry of ours
in granting forgiveness in God’s name. What has happened?
Well, everybody in this room will certainly be eloquent in
explaining that, but again, I think we need to have a look
at changes that might well be appropriate in what’s happened
to our confessional.

Magisterial documents reclaiming this tradition
But this has been introduction, what I’d like to say
something about is really this series of magisterial
documents which pertain to the priesthood. I think they’re
remarkable. The first was 1994 and that’s the Directory
on the Ministry and Life of Priests. I remember when I
was National Chairman of the Australian Confraternity
of Catholic Clergy, you know we were struck by the fact
that this document, from the Congregation of the Clergy,
had been released but we’ve heard almost nothing of it.
Perhaps copies were sent out by Bishops to their priests,
but there were no meetings – at least not that I heard of,
and certainly not in my former diocese, and I think it may
have been true of many other diocese; and this document
was never picked up and made the subject of plenary
meetings or whatever. I regard this as being a wonderful
and extraordinary document and then it’s succeeded
three years later in 1997 by the Instruction, On Certain
Questions Regarding Collaboration of the Non-Ordained
Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests. Then there
came after that, two years later, The Priest and the Third
Christian Millennium. And then finally, last year, there
came on the 4th August, The Priest, Pastor and Leader
of the Parish Community.

Reclaiming the ministry and life of priests in
dioceses
Now I have certainly been speaking about these documents
in my diocese – and especially this last one – and I’ve had
very good reaction from priests. In fact, we’re going to
take it up again at our next meeting of priests of the diocese
and we’re going to fill out some of the themes in it. But
I would suggest that certainly these three – the 1994 and
1999 documents and together with this last – form a very
appropriate series of readings for our meditation as priests.
They are immensely strengthening and remember that in
these documents we encounter the genuine voice and mind
of the Church. You can’t get closer to the Church than this.
And what you find in them is that there is a total continuity
in these documents going right back to the document of
Pius XI at ??????? ????????? . And that’s where you find the
first papal exposition in modern times of phrase sacerdos
alter Christus. Now what you can trace in the time since
then, through the [Second Vatican] Council has been, as it
were, a setting aside of that understanding of the priesthood
– not intentionally, it was never intentional, certainly not
intentional in the Council. When you read the Council
documents, you see that there’s an enriching process going
on which sees now the priest as not solely the cultic figure
but still the cultic figure who is still standing there at the
altar doing what the priest has always done, but other aspects
of priestly ministry are amplified, in the Council documents
and in those which followed them. The priest as the preacher
of the Word who calls the assembly to faith through the
preaching of the Word of God was perhaps fairly new. Now
probably in the old days that was understood to be part of it
but it was now made much clearer. The priest as the leader
of the parish community, as it were, amongst the community
of faith, brothers and sisters in the faith. He’s the one who’s
nourishing, who’s guiding, who’s leading; but, above all,
through the sacraments is the one who represents the person
of Christ in the assembly over which he presides and feeds
them with Christ himself. So you have this enlargement,
but what happened was that it was the enlargements which
captured the imagination of many people, and the original
and essential role of the priest as the personal representative
of Christ that was lost.

Parish priests as an icon of the presence of the
historical Christ
And so now, coming to this document you see the priest
described as the parish priest must be seen to be – an icon
of the presence of a historical Christ. Isn’t that terrific! An
icon of the presence of the historical Christ. So it’s like that
– you’ve got the historical Christ and then two stages, as it
were, removed almost out of deference to the sacred. He is
(1) an icon of (2) the presence. You know, like in Ezekiel’s,
“The appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”
Now here we are icons of the presence of the historical
Christ. And that’s one of the phrases I think you’ll find just
leaps out of that document. And another phrase that is used
to describe the priests in this document is “The priest is to be
a master of the spiritual life.” A master of the spiritual life.
He is the one par excellence who leads people to Christ and
leads other leaders to lead people to Christ. And that’s by
the nourishments he gives in his spiritual conversation and
teaching and in his example. He’s seen to be and experienced
to be – not only heard to be – the master of the spiritual life. So there he is standing in the place of Christ, an instrument whom Christ takes into his hands to communicate, to teach and to make present his sacrifice and to be the instrument of conveying to the people as a shepherd the Father’s mercy and reconciliation.

Restoring a proper perspective of hierarchy and laity

There is another constant theme that runs through all of these documents, and I’d just like to say something about that because it’s a striking phrase and it’s persistent. And it is the priest in relation to his people and, at least so far as I’ve been able to trace, it occurs first of all in Christifidelis laici of 1988 and it is a cautionary phrase against clericalising the laity and laicising the clergy. And it’s enlaged upon again and again in documents which have followed. Pastores dabo vobis of 1992, and again in this Directory of 1994, and again in the 1997 Instruction. And it’s also there in The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community. Although it’s very interesting to see that from 1988 to 2002 there has been some sort of modification in the sense that the last reference when this phrase is used it says, “At the present time, circumstances are such that it is possible to overcome the danger of clericalising the laity and secularising the clergy.” But I do wonder whether that optimism really is justified amongst us just “at present”. I think that there has grown up a very real danger of what somebody else has called “creating a class of laity who are de facto an “adjunct clergy””. And I think that this is now a problem that has to be addressed and I would say the responsibility lies very much with us to give good clear teaching. I’m not in any way referring with any sort of disparagement, rather the reverse – with great appreciation of all of those good, many of them getting on in years, Catholics who week by week make themselves available to take Holy Communion to parishioners who are in nursing homes and hospitals and other sorts of things. I think that this ministry which began in the 1970s is really best exemplified by those people who, with a real expression of faith, and a love for the Eucharist at which they themselves are so often present, even day after day, they are going out, taking the Eucharist to people who can’t come to Mass.

Continuing and present dangers of lax approach to the Blessed Sacrament

What I am referring to is the almost routine acceptance now of the six or eight people at Sunday Mass who go up to stand around the altar to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. I think that this is something really that now has to be looked at. And it has to be looked at in the light of the teaching of the Church. And the first thing we’ll discover is that there is nowhere which suggests that this assistance in distributing Holy Communion at the Sunday Mass or with large numbers of people, especially to give Communion under both kinds; there is no suggestion that this is a genuine role of lay people in the Church. In fact you find exactly the opposite. It is, whenever it is done, and whenever the laity handle the sacred species, it is always an extraordinary action – always extraordinary. Our problem now seems to be that this has become so ordinary as almost to indicate that lay people are ordinary ministers, at least of the distribution of Holy Communion – and I would hazard a guess that there would be a very large percentage of practising Catholics who only rarely would receive Holy Communion from the hands of a priest. Most commonly they’d receive communion from the hands of another lay person. And what you find is that what began with ????????? in 1973 has now just blown out … and I’m just saying, you know ???? ????? more or less that it’s time now to have a look at it – because I think it has had the effect of blurring in many, many people’s minds, and not least of the young, the distinct vocation and work of a Catholic priest. Now that’s my way of seeing it anyway.

Retrieving a true appreciation of the vocation of the laity

So, there’s also another – actually some of these documents – I just might quote; I think they bear some quotation. From the Directory in the Ministry and Life of a Priest: “The mentality which confuses the duties of the priest with those of the lay faithful cannot be permitted in the Church. One of the ways to avoid falling into this democratic mentality is to shun the so-called clericalisation of the laity which tends to diminish the ministerial priesthood of the priest. After the Bishop, the term ‘Pastor’ can only be attributed in a proper and biblical sense to the priest by virtue of the ministerial priesthood which he has received at his ordination. The attribute ‘pastoral’ in fact refers both to the form potestas docendi et sanctificandi and to the potestas regendi (both to the power of teaching and sanctifying, and the power of governing). It should be remembered that these tendencies do not favour the true advancement of the laity because they frequently forget the authentic ecclesial vocation and mission of the laity in the world.” Now you’ll find that very strong, of course, in Christifidelis laici that the genuine role of lay people in the Church is their secular vocation and you’ll find it also expressed in the first part of this Directory.

Retrieving the term “ministry”

There are two addresses by Pope John Paul II, one in 1994 and another four years later (this is also in the 1994 address and it’s not long after the Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests). “We cannot increase the communion and unity of the Church by clericalising the lay faithful or by laicising the clergy. Hence to speak of the participation of the lay faithful in the ministry of priests it is first of all necessary to reflect carefully on the term ‘ministry’ and on the various meanings it can have in theological and canonical language. For some time now it has been customary to use the word ‘ministries’, not only for the ??????????? and ????????? excised by pastors in virtue of the sacrament of order but also for those exercised by the lay faithful in virtue of the baptismal priesthood, but it must be admitted that this language becomes doubtful, confused and hence not helpful for expressing the doctrine of the faith, whenever the difference of the essence, and not merely of degree, between the baptismal priesthood and the ordained priesthood is in any way obscured.” You will all have seen various pamphlets on “ministries.” Everything’s a ministry now, whether it’s the music ministry or it’s the ministry of hospitality or the ministry of whatever – the over-use of the word “ministry”. And I’ve tracked down,
Building complementarity and reclaiming “apostolates”

A couple of ad limina addresses also were pertinent here where the Bishop – the Pope was speaking actually to Bishops, one to the United States four years ago: “Full and active participation does not mean that everyone does everything, since this would lead to a clericalising of the laity and the laicising of the clergy.” Here’s the phrase that comes back again, and again, and again. And this [clericalising the laity and laicising the clergy] is not what the [Second Vatican] Council had in mind, and I like this next phrase because it reflects so much of what is being said in this document, vis-a-vis the priest’s relationship with the faithful of his parish. He says: “The liturgy, like the Church, is intended to be hierarchical and polyphonic, respecting the different roles assigned by Christ and allowing the different voices to blend in one great hymn of praise.” If we have a project before us, it is to clarify and re-establish this complementarity of the work which lay people do, which we always used to call “apostolates” – apostolates by virtue of the sacrament of baptism: they are working with Christ and for Christ in what they are doing, as catechists and all of the other roles that they perform (such as, St Vincent de Paul, Legion of Mary and the other groups in the parishes, etc.), they are doing it by virtue of their baptism into Christ. And that is, however, nourished and made more fruitful by the unique ministry of the priest by virtue of the sacrament of order. So it’s this polyphonic relationship in the parish which this document seeks to encourage.

Extraordinary (“special”) ministers

What do you do about extraordinary ministers? The proliferation of them. It’s not unusual for me to receive from a parish a list of sixty names! Now I don’t know them at all and my presumption is that the parish priest has invited these people, they have been trained, they have been given a clear understanding, a better understanding of the Catholic doctrine in regard to the Eucharist, they have been educated in the proper and reverent handling of the blessed Eucharist and all of the proper things that we would take for granted for handling the Eucharist. But what are they doing? Sixty of them? I had a parish with three nursing homes, one of them very big, and between 40 and 50 people at home at any one time, I had 16 [not 60] extraordinary ministers, and they were just wonderful people and most of them were at weekday Mass. When it came to filling the ranks the first thing I did was to look and see who’s at daily Mass and they’d be the people to be approached. So, this 1997 Instruction on Certain Questions … includes a caution which says, “The function of extraordinary ministers is supplementary. Certain practices are to be avoided and eliminated where they have emerged. The habitual use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass thus arbitrarily extending the concept of ‘a great number of the faithful’.” “Whenever the number of faithful wishing to receive Holy Communion is so great that the celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged”, that’s what originally was said, but this has been expanded and sort of pushed out to mean that there’s no reason why you shouldn’t have all these extraordinary ministers at Mass, and I think there needs to be a little bit of thought devoted to this and some work done on what you can do now to rein in this inflated number of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. And I think one of the first things you can do is start using that phrase – “Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion” – instead of “Special Ministers of the Eucharist”, because the lay people are not ministers of the Eucharist at all. They are really called on to lend an extra pair of hands to the priests in the fulfilment of what is proper to him as one of his ordinary tasks which is to distribute Holy Communion, not to be a lay minister of the Eucharist.

And local applications: the “Statement of Conclusions”

So I commend above all this document, The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community, to you and to your meditation if you haven’t already come across it, and I’m sure probably most of you have, as you’ll find it very nourishing and help when you’re understanding and in your relationships with your people, those of you who are parish priests, but it is addressed to all priests and towards the end it says that the Congregation for the Clergy offers this present document as an aid for, and an encouragement to, and a stimulus for, the ministry of priests entrusted with the pastoral care of souls in parishes. So you notice in these documents there’s a care for and a concern for the priests who are in – as the document also says, whether it’s this one or it’s another one of these – it says the priest is in the “front line”…. Real concern about the ministry of the priest. Just for our Australian situation, too, you may recall, and it’s useful to recall, the Statement of Conclusions. This is my copy of it and it’s always sitting on my desk. Sadly, it’s not had the attention that it deserves. This, of course, was 1998 – the famous last ad limina – and now we approach another in 2003. I quote: “Despite the goodwill involved, in a sometimes functional approach to priesthood the identity of the priest has been further clouded when tasks have been entrusted to laity that belong to the ministerial
priesthood. The situation has had the effect of blurring the lines between the baptismal priesthood and the ministerial priesthood with negative effects on both. Clarity in this area is essential for many reasons, not least of which are the preservation of the authentic identity of both priest and laity, good order within the Church and the promotion of vocations.” You know, what more can you say than that? And that was said in 1998, but is it resonating in our diocese and amongst the parish clergy? I think it should be. And accompanying that in 1998 the Holy Father didn’t actually deliver a talk to the Australian Bishops for whatever reason, but copies of it were given to them, and it says, “It falls to the Bishop to order this collaboration properly, in particular by ensuring that the parish priest is not perceived as merely one minister among many with particular responsibility for the sacraments, nor as one whose teaching office and governance is limited by the will of the majority or a vocal minority.” Does that resonate? Here’s more: “The Australian sense of equality must not be used as an excuse for stripping the parish priest of the authority and duties that pertain to his office, making it appear that the ministerial priesthood is less essential to the local church community.” So, we have very clearly an agenda there before us, and I’m simply raising the consciousness and awareness of what I believe to be an important part that lies ahead of us in not just the future, but right now.

* Most Rev Geoffrey H. Jarrett is Bishop of Lismore NSW and past National Chairman of the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy. Some punctuation changes and headings are supplied by the Editor and the transcription from tapes was by Mrs Marie Swanson. The “talk” tenor of the address has been retained (Ed.).

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**DOCTRINAL QUESTION BOX**

**Thomas Sapientia**

**Q.** I am a student at a supposedly “reformed” seminary, and yet several members of the Faculty implicitly and even explicitly teach against the physical resurrection of Our Lord – for example, “Whatever the ‘empty tomb’ means, it does not mean a physical resurrection”. Is there any way that such teaching can be construed as Catholic? What am I to do?

**A.** It is difficult to advise “What to do” in such situations that are perpetuated by systemic inaction. You need the confidential help of a reliable priest. No answer is going to relieve you of difficulties in formation in the Catholic Faith and in satisfying the assessment requirements in such an environment, but some words of clarification on the key issue may help.

The testimonies of the New Testament, including the Gospels, are not simply chronologies: they are interpretative acts. But not simply “subjective” interpretive acts by the human authors, for they are rooted in specific “time”/“place” events (CCC #647). Further, the core of this interpretative traditions draws on how Our Lord himself interpreted or “read” these events. That is the meaning of the Lukan testimony of the resurrected Christ himself explaining the Scriptures about himself (Lk 24:27). This also is the meaning of the Johannine testimony that the Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance the Lord’s teaching on these events (Jn 14:26). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament authors give literary form to the testimony of the Church as instructed by Our Lord and the Holy Spirit.

There are certain keynotes that ring loud and clear in this literary testimony, and perhaps none more loudly and clearly than the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This is seen, for example, in Matthew, where the women took hold of the feet of the resurrected Jesus (Mt 28:9). In Luke, the resurrected Jesus at table took bread, blessed and broke it, and handed it to the two disciples at Emmaus (Lk 24:30). And in John, the resurrected Jesus invites Thomas to place his hand in his wounds (Jn 20:27, also Lk 24:39).

The manner of the presence of Jesus in the resurrection appearances differs from the experience of the disciples prior to his death (eg, “and he vanished from their sight”, Lk 24:31, also 1Cor 15:44). But the emphasis before the Ascension on handling and eating as well as hearing and seeing are clear testimonies of the apostolic Church that the Lord’s resurrection was not simply “spiritual” (and, indeed, as was explained in the last issue of this column, the Lord’s presence in the Eucharist is not simply “spiritual”).

The firm point in the Gospel (that is, the Church’s proclamation of the “good news”) of the life, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus is that the incarnation (Lk 1:31, Jn 1:14) has never ended: the enfleshed Word of God is glorified in heaven, and in the same manner as the Church witnessed his glorification, so will the Church greet his coming again (Acts 1:11).

Of course, all this, and more, is found in the conciliar definitions of the early Church and is recently amplified in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC #638-682). Doubtlessly, those who in supposedly Catholic faculties teach otherwise have sophisticated renderings of their teaching, but philosophy rightly understood amplifies the data of faith, not substitutes it. At whatever cost, you as a Catholic and as a student for holy orders must adhere to and build yourself up on the faith “once delivered to the apostles” (Jude 3,20). May God strengthen you in this faith. The Church needs your young faithfulness to the Risen Christ who invited the witnesses of his resurrection “... above all to verify that the risen body in which he appeared to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his passion” (CCC #645).

**Thomas Sapientia** is a pen name. The column is prepared in consultation with a panel of experts: Rev Dr Peter Murphy, Rev Dr Anthony Percy, Rev Dr Joseph Rheinberger, Rev Dr Edward Tyler, Mr John Young.
Cardinal Arinze: a man of action

Responses from the Roman Curia are often painfully slow in coming, and it is edifying to note that the new Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments took only 10 days to respond to a question on kneeling during Holy Communion put to the Congregation by the Chairman of the USA Bishop’s Committee on the Liturgy. The question (“dubium”) and the answer (“responsum”) are reproduced below.

Cardinal Arinze’s administrative style is reflected also in his literary style, and an address to a liturgy conference in Denver USA on 8 March 2003 shows a succinct ability to name liturgical abuses and to urge better practice. Some choice quotes are given below.

Kneeling during the Rite of Holy Communion

Cardinal Francis George, chairman of the Committee on the Liturgy, submitted a dubium concerning the practice of kneeling after receiving Holy Communion to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on 26 May 2003:

Dubium: In many places, the faithful are accustomed to kneeling or sitting in personal prayer upon returning to their places after having individually received Holy Communion during Mass. Is it the intention of the Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia, to forbid this practice?

Cardinal Francis Arinze responded to the question on 5 June 2003 (Prot. N. 855/03/L):

Responsum: Negative, et ad mentem (No, for this reason). The mens [reason] is that the prescription of the Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani, no. 43, is intended, on the one hand to ensure within broad limits a certain uniformity of posture within the congregation for the various parts of the celebration of Holy Mass, and on the other, not to regulate posture rigidly in such a way that those who wish to kneel or sit would no longer be free [to do so].

Extracts from Denver address

These extracts from an address under the title of “The Sacred Liturgy Builds up the Church” by the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze, of 8 March 2003 are drawn from Adoremus Bulletin IX(4), June 2003.

The Church could not live without the liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist. Many martyrs in the early Church defied the imperial decree of Diocletian and accepted death rather than miss the Sunday Eucharist. The martyr of Abitinia in Proconsular Africa, for example, replied to their accusers: “Without fear of any kind we have celebrated the Lord’s Supper, because it cannot be missed; that is our law. We cannot live without the Lord’s Supper” (Actu SS. Saturnini, Sativi et plurimorum Martyrum in Africa, 7,9,10: PL 8, 707, 709-710; cf. also Dies Domini, 46).

When ... we speak about the hierarchical or organic structure of the Church, it is not a question of who is holier than the other. It is not a struggle for power. It is a question of observing the nature of the Church as constituted by Christ. It would therefore be a mistake to try to clericalise the laity by subtly getting them to struggle with the priest for roles in the sanctuary. It would be equally wrong to try to laicise the clergy in a type of ecclesiastical democracy by suggesting that there is no difference between them and the rest of the faithful.

The sacred liturgy provides for many moments of quiet listening, personal reflection and silent prayer so that the worshipper praises God not just with the lips but with mind and heart (cf. Is 29:13; Mt 15:8; Mk 7:6). The priest celebrant should favour such moments that promote personal prayer. And the choir should not try to fill every quiet moment with a song.

The post-communion prayer should not be said without allowing people moments for personal prayer after they have received Christ. And after Mass, thanksgiving to the Jesus we encounter should not be omitted. Hurry and unnecessary talking in church should be avoided.

This recalls the adage coined by Prosper of Aquitaine: “Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi”. This can be freely rendered as: “Let the way we pray reflect and manifest what we believe” (cf. CCC #1124).

The primary direction of liturgical worship is vertical. We want to adore God, praise Him and thank Him. We want to celebrate the mysteries of Christ our Saviour. All participants in the liturgy should watch out for, and avoid temptations to draw attention to oneself. The priest who preaches, the choir that leads the singing and the reader who proclaims a lesson, should not attract attention to themselves.

We come to Mass and other liturgical celebrations to adore God, not to entertain one another. All forms of horizontalisation, making a show, or amusing the congregation should be avoided.

(For the full address see Adoremus.org site.)

“A largely secularised culture which seeks to isolate the priest within its own conceptual categories and to strip him of his fundamental mystical-sacramental dimension is largely responsible for [the choking of the nobility of the daily efforts of priests]. ... Above all else, it is the rediscovery of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, as the sole Saviour of mankind [that is necessary for the evangelisation of contemporary society].”

(Congregation for the Clergy, 2002, The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community #29)

“... Respect must everywhere be shown for the feelings of all those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition, but a wide and generous application of the directives already issued some time ago by the Apostolic See for the use of the Roman Missal according to the typical edition of 1962”

(John Paul II, 1988, Ecclesia Dei, #6c, Congregation for Divine Worship, 1984, Quattuor abhinc annos).
Liturgical music and song: an examination of conscience

David Schütz*

Introduction

In his General Audience of 26 February 2003, the Holy Father used a reflection on Psalm 150 as occasion to call for an examination of conscience that would rid our churches of ugly texts and music. His words (in translation) were:

It is necessary to constantly discover and live the beauty of prayer and of the liturgy. One must pray to God not only with theologically precise formulas, but also in a beautiful and dignified way. In this connection, the Christian community must make an examination of conscience so that the beauty of music and hymnody will return increasingly to the liturgy. It is necessary to purify worship of deformations, of careless forms of expression, of ill-prepared music and texts, which are not very suited to the grandeur of the act being celebrated (cf, L’Osservatore Romano, 5 March 2003, p. 11).

This very timely appeal of Pope John Paul II provides a departure point and a theme for this paper. The observation that much of today’s church music and hymnody is “not very suited” to the nature and reality of our liturgical celebrations is perhaps commonplace. But what is striking is the Pope’s appeal for an examination of conscience in this regard.

“Examination of conscience” is a term that we usually associate with the recollection of our sins prior to confession and repentance. Is the Holy Father really saying that our use of music that is “not very suited” to the liturgy is sinful? If he is, then it is a serious matter. It means that liturgical music is not merely a matter of taste, but may just possibly be a matter of morality or ethics.

How can that be? Maybe we underestimate the magnitude and purpose of the liturgical act, as we come in the company of the angels and the saints into the very presence of God, in order to offer him our sacrifice of praise. Maybe we underestimate the important role that sacred music and song plays in the pastoral care of souls, as it lifts their hearts to God, enriches their prayer, expresses their deepest emotions, and puts true words of praise on their lips. In his meditation on Psalm 150, Pope John Paul II highlights these two dimensions in the liturgy: prayer, greatly aided by music, is like Jacobs ladder, on which the angels of God ascend and descend between the liturgy on earth and the heavenly liturgy. If we properly appreciated both the human (pastoral) and divine (doxological) importance of liturgical music, we would not be so quick to underestimate the moral obligation the pastor has to feed his parishioners on a healthy diet of sacred music and song.

The American Lutheran lay-theologian and musician, Marva Dawn (author of Reaching out without dumbing down and A Royal Waste of Time), regularly compares the musical repertoire of a parish to kinds of food diets that parents give their children. Sometimes a little fast food is okay – it tastes good, but it’s not good for you. A regular diet of fast food will leave you sick and starving. Sometimes too a five course French dinner is the go for special celebrations – but again they are special, and take a lot of effort by real experts to prepare them. Most of the time we just need a solid, healthy diet – and although that might mean meat and three veg on a regular basis, we will grow strong on it. Liturgical music and song is analogous. Sometimes the emotive, entertaining style of music might be a treat. Sometimes a full polyphonic choral setting of the Eucharist might be appropriate and even attainable for a high festival. But we need to give most of our attention to the “meat and three veg” hymnody and music: our day to day basic repertoire that we can be sure will nourish faith in the faithful.

The Holy Father highlights three areas that require “purification” in worship: “deformations”, “careless forms of expression” and “ill-prepared music and texts”. I am not quite sure what is meant by “deformations”. Perhaps he hints at this when later in his commentary on Psalm 150 when he refers to the warning of St Paul to the Ephesians to “avoid intemperance and vulgarity”. On the other hand, “careless forms of expression” and “ill-prepared music and text” are all too identifiable. It might sound as if these phrases refer only to the performance or execution of the music. On the contrary, I believe the Pope is also referring to the actual composition of the music and the text, which often today shows signs of “carelessness”. A brief examination of the latest offerings from the publishers of church music will be enough to give the distinct impression that much of it is a “rushed job”, prepared by professional composers who have to keep up singing a “new song” every week in order to make their living. The result is music that is neither “theologically precise” nor “beautiful and dignified”.

So what about this “examination of conscience”? We are all familiar with the devotional lists of questions that are used by those preparing for confession. I propose that we need just such a list to help us identify the faults of our liturgical music and song. Such a list would be more beneficial than George Weigel’s recent tongue-in-cheek suggestion of an Index Canticorum Prohibitorum (http://www.the-tidings.com/2003/0808/weigel_text.htm). The latter would, I think, rob us of the responsibility of deeply reflecting on the pastoral principles of liturgical music.

A good place to begin in any “examination” of one’s pastoral practice would be in relation to what the Church requires of us. Unfortunately, we have had very little magisterial guidance in relation to Catholic church music in recent decades. The last document of any significance on church music to be released for the universal church was Musicam sacram in 1967, and reading it today shows that it hardly
addresses the more pressing issues of the contemporary crisis. Perhaps, in view of the lamentable era in sacred music that followed its release, it even failed to address the issues of its own day. That does not mean to say that familiarity with the relevant magisterial documents would not be beneficial (which include Tra le sollecitudine 1963, Musicae sacræ 1955, Sacrosanctum concilium 1963 as well as Musicam sacram). However, over the last forty years the proverbial goal posts have been shifted so far away from their original position, that we have to learn to kick in new directions if we want to continue to score the goals these documents originally had in mind.

So the musical “examination of conscience” that follows cannot claim anything close to magisterial authority. Readers will almost certainly disagree with some of the faults identified below. However, among those for whom this is a daily pastoral concern, there is a fair degree of consensus about what is and is not helpful in liturgical music and hymnody, and I hope the following “examination” reflects this consensus to some degree.

Most of what follows relates to the choice of liturgical songs. Purely instrumental music also has a place in the liturgy (as Musicam sacram acknowledged), but it plays second fiddle (so to speak) to sung texts. In this connection, we should also be aware that good liturgical music in any parish is the result of hundreds of individual choices that need to be made every time we chose what will be sung at Mass. And because these are always pastoral decisions, good liturgical music will only ever be developed through the exercise of faithfulness – constant, steadfast, unwavering insistence upon what is right and good even in the face of opposition.

Do I value sacred music?

This question addresses first principles. As long as pastors are not convinced of the pastoral value of developing good sacred music in the parish, they will not put any effort into it. After all, there are so many other demands on the parish priest’s time. Sacred music must first be recognised as a priority if it is to get any attention at all. The Pope believes it is a priority. And as the evidence stands, the Church has historically agreed that it is a priority. And the Second Vatican Council, in Sacrosanctum Concilium gives it a very high priority indeed:

The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn Liturgy (SC §112).

This statement assumes that the words of the liturgy are ordinarily united to music and therefore that “sacred song” is as “necessary or integral” to the liturgy as the words themselves. This is reinforced in the recent Editio Tertia Typica of the Missal where the music of the liturgy is once more shown together with the words of the rite. Obviously the Council Fathers knew of the “said mass”, but they assumed the liturgical norm would be the “sung Mass”. Most Australian Catholics would be surprised to learn this. Most lay persons, and probably many parish priests, would regard music in the liturgy as “icing on the cake” for special occasions or an annoyance to be endured. Rather, music has an essential pastoral role in the liturgy. Its use makes a qualitative difference to the liturgy, both in terms of deepening the effect of the words upon the participant and in terms of heightening the prayer, praise and adoration which is directed to God in the liturgy. Therefore we need to value it.

Have I observed the proper “degrees of participation” in choosing sung parts?

A re-reading of Musicam sacram has a few surprises. Once we have agreed on the value of sacred music and song, our next question will be “what should we sing?” Musicam sacram suggests three “degrees of participation … for reasons of pastoral usefulness”. It suggests that “these degrees are so arranged that the first may be used even by itself, but the second and third, wholly or partially, may never be used without the first.” What therefore, belongs to the “first degree”?

“1st degree”

- In the entrance rites: the greeting of the priest together with the reply of the people; the prayer.
- In the Liturgy of the Word: the acclamations at the Gospel.
- In the Eucharistic Liturgy: the prayer over the offerings; the preface with its dialogue and the Sanctus; the final doxology of the Canon, the Lord’s Prayer with its introduction and embolism; the Pax Domini; the prayer after the Communion; the formulas of dismissal.

“2nd degree”

This consists of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, prayer of the faithful, and Agnus Dei. It is not until we reach the “third degree” that we encounter

“3rd degree”

It is not until we reach this level that we encounter:

- the songs at the Entrance and Communion processions;
- the songs after the Lesson or Epistle;
- the Alleluia before the Gospel;
- the song at the Offertory;
- the readings of Sacred Scripture, unless it seems more suitable to proclaim them without singing.

The irony of this is that, at least in Australia today, it is almost universally the practice to reverse these three “degrees”, such that those parts of the liturgy listed under the “first degree” are the least likely to be sung, and those parts under the “third degree” (with the exception of chanting the readings) the most likely. The result is that many of our liturgies tend to resemble the Protestant “four hymn sandwich”, where between the spoken parts of the mass, sung hymns are inserted at the entrance, offertory, communion and recession. The principle, as far as Musicam sacram is concerned, is that

... in selecting the parts which are to be sung, one should start with those that are by their nature of greater importance, and especially those which are to be sung by the priest or by the ministers, with the people replying, or those which are to be sung by the priest and people together.
Have I allowed Gregorian chant to sink even further into disuse?

One thing all the magisterial documents are clear on, is that Gregorian chant is “specially suited to the Roman liturgy; therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services” (SC 116). Pope Pius XII called the chant a “precious treasure” concerning which “it is the duty of all those to whom Christ the Lord has entrusted the task of guarding and dispensing the Church’s riches to preserve” (Musicam sacram of Pope Pius XII, para. 55). Any examination of our musical conscience fifty years later must acknowledge that the way in which we have squandered this treasure is nothing short of scandalous.

It is clear that the Council expected the Church to make the effort to preserve the chant together with the translation of the liturgy into the vernacular. Although there is some evidence of some effort being made in this direction, it seems that that effort was half-hearted. No one seems to have believed in it enough to persevere and make it work. In this country, two slightly different approved settings of the chant for the Mass created (and continue to create) extra confusion. In the Church today there ought to be at least one Gregorian setting of the Mass that is well known enough to be sung all the way from Perth to Cairns (and from Rome to back of Bourke, for that matter). Even the hymnals have abandoned the chant. I know of only one currently available Catholic hymnal that has an plainchant setting of the Mass in English (Adoremus Hymnal).

There even seems to be a mistaken idea that the chant will only work for Latin and cannot be adapted to English. This can be disproved by a quick glance at the Lutheran churches. They have a standard chant setting of their liturgy which was preserved at the time of the Reformation in German and has since been translated into a host of other languages the world over, including English, and (in central Australia) the Aboriginal language of Arrunta.

Still, there is reason to believe that 1500 years of tradition cannot be kept buried away for ever. It is fashionable to point to the fact that Gregorian chant has made a resurgence in the popular music charts. This shows that people are keen to hear and sing the chant if someone will teach them. Our parishes are over abundant. They include (Deirdre Browne), Hosea (Gregory Norbet), I am the bread of life (Suzanne Toolan), Strong and constant (Frank Andersen), Isaiah 49 (Carey Landry), Be not afraid (Bob Dufford), and have a standard chant setting of their liturgy which was preserved at the time of the Reformation in German and has since been translated into a host of other languages the world over, including English, and (in central Australia) the Aboriginal language of Arrunta.

Songs about “us”

The first type sings about us and about what we are doing or should be doing. Some modern hymn texts verge on the narcissistic, gazing not up to God, but into the navel of the worshipping community. Traditionally there have been two types of hymn. On the one hand a hymn could be explicitly addressed to God (or Christ as the case may be). Such hymns are sung prayers, voicing adoration, petition, thanksgiving or confession of faith. Alternatively, a hymn could be a hymn of praise, that is, a song about God (or Christ, etc.), extolling his attributes and actions to the world. But what we have in this new batch of hymns are songs that sing about ourselves, in which we tell ourselves (or perhaps God in case he doesn’t know) about our attributes and actions. Maybe this has come about through the demand for sacred song that matches the ritual actions in the Mass. Since one dimensional liturgical thinking sees all ritual action as our action, such songs end up singing about ourselves. So at the entrance procession we sing about coming into each other’s presence (rather than into the presence of Christ [cf, CCC §1348]) and we sing about the gifts we bring at the offertory procession.

Examples of this type of song include: Gather as in (Marty Haugen), Song of the Body of Christ (David Haas), We are companions on the journey (Peter Kearney), Bring forth the Kingdom (Marty Haugen), Ashes (Conroy/Joncas), We are the Church (Christopher Walker), As Grains of Wheat (Laurence Rosania).

Songs that displace the “Word”

The second type has been identified by Richard Connolly as a true innovation, the like of which could not have been found in the Church “from St Ambrose to about 1970”). This is the liturgical song “whose ‘voice’ or speaking persona is that of God speaking to us, not us to him” (The Summit, May 2003). In these songs, the focus is truly confused. The people sing as if they were God singing to them. Almost without doubt this type of text arose after Vatican II when composers sought to produce songs based on passages of Scripture. The Council in fact encouraged this (SC §121). Those passages of scripture in which God speaks his promises to his people were naturally most attractive to the composers of new songs, but they failed (and continue to fail) to do the necessary theological internalisation required to turn these passages from a form in which God addresses us into songs in which we respond to God in praise or adoration for his promises. Hence we get songs in which we sing God’s words to ourselves. Connolly wonders if such songs may not be a usurping of the role of the liturgy of the word. Perhaps they do. They certainly do not function as sacrifices of praise to God. Examples of this type of song are over abundant. They include Come as you are (Deirdre Browne), Hosea (Gregory Norbet), I am the bread of life (Suzanne Toolan), Strong and constant (Frank Andersen), Isaiah 49 (Carey Landry), Be not afraid (Bob Dufford),
I have loved you (Michael Joncas), Remain in my love (Christopher Willcock), and Our Supper Invitation (Kevin Bates). There are many others.

Have I allowed songs to be sung in the liturgy that contain teaching contrary to the Faith?

Sacrosanctum concilium (§121) insisted that “the texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine.” In other words, what we sing in the liturgy must be true. This really ought to be the first commandment of liturgical song. Whether we sing about God, ourselves or the world around us, what we sing must be true. This is demanded by the inverse of the principle lex orandi lex credendi, but it is also a part of the primary duty of care that pastors have toward their flocks.

Words that are sung “sink in”, and find a lodging place in the heart far deeper than words that are merely spoken. Everyone from 16th century reformers to 21st century advertising executives have understood this. Everyone, that is, except the pastors of Catholic parishes who have not paid sufficient attention to what their people are singing week in and week out at Sunday mass. The American liturgical theologian Don Saliers, at a lecture given at Ormond College in 2002, told the story of an Afro-American woman who once told him that when she heard the spoken gospel, she could acknowledge that it was true, “but when I sings it I believes it!”

Singing, by its nature, involves more of the individual than mere speaking – both physically and spiritually. Singing, as an aid to memory and a thus a prime means of teaching the faith, has been used to good effect in the past. Today however, “careless forms of expression” have led to a falsification of the faith. Lucy E. Carroll, in an article published in November 2002 entitled “Singing for the supper or the sacrifice?” (Adoremus. VIII:8) has clearly demonstrated the unsatisfactory standard of contemporary song texts for the Eucharist. If people keep on singing about “sharing bread and wine” in the Eucharist rather than about communing on the body and blood of Christ, it won’t take long for them to cease believing in the real presence. Carroll’s list of Eucharistic hymns that fall short of “conformity with Catholic doctrine” include: We Remember (Marty Haugen), Bread, Blessed and Broken (Michael Lynch), Gather Us In (Marty Haugen), Bread of Life (Bernadette Farrell), Now We Remain (David Haas), Bread for the World (Bernadette Farrell), Song of the Body of Christ (David Haas) and To be Your Bread (David Hart). One could also include Bernadette Farrell’s paraphrase version of the Agnus Dei in her setting of the Mass, where the people are asked to sing “Hear our prayer, hear our prayer, through this bread and wine we share…” Whatever kind of teaching this might be, it is not “in conformity with Catholic doctrine”.

Other hymns intentionally fail to conform to the Church’s doctrine. These supposedly avant guard hymn writers are usually saying something about the gender or nature of God. Some attempt to feminise God, such as John Bell’s Enemy of Apathy which insistently calls the Holy Spirit “She”. Bernadette Farrell’s God beyond all names suggests that all names for God, even revealed names like “Father” and “Jesus”, are ultimately just human attempts at naming God rather than God’s gracious self-revelation of his essential nature. Other hymns just seem to be beyond the bounds of Christian doctrine entirely. Marty Haugen’s One Ohana and Song at the Centre both seem to be exploring a sort of pantheistic nature spirituality rather than a Christian doctrine of creation.

Sometimes the theological errors are simply cases of what the Pope has called “careless forms of expression”. In this category, one could put Dan Schutte’s glaring theological error in Glory and Praise to our God when he asks the congregation to sing “Though the power of sin prevails!” It certainly does not prevail! What he meant was “Though the power of sin is strong…” which would have been a rather more felicitous phrase and more theologically correct.

All these songs have been written by supposedly Catholic authors. It may be worth noting in passing that some of the very best available “catholic” hymnody has in fact been written by Protestants. Among these could be named, Holy God we praise thy name, Alleluia, sing to Jesus, Sing of Mary, pure and lowly, and You holy angels bright (Ye holy angels bright (Ed.)). It just goes to show that each text needs to be judged on what it actually says, not on its pedigree.

Have I discouraged congregational participation in liturgical song?

The popular adage is that “Catholics can’t sing”. Given that Catholics do not differ biologically from other human beings, this would be surprising if it were true. More correctly, various cultural and habitual factors are to blame for the poor quality of Catholic congregational singing. Not all parish priests are convinced of the necessity of congregational participation in liturgical music. Even fewer parishioners share this conviction. An anecdote may be excusable here. I occasionally attend a large Catholic parish in a rural sea-side holiday spot. The usual fare here on Sunday mornings is spoken Mass with Come as you are or Here I am Lord at the beginning and end. One morning they had a visiting vocal and guitar group from the city, who led the people in singing the parts of the Mass as well as four songs. One elderly worshiper was heard to comment afterwards: “A bit of a sing-song this morning, eh?”

The conciliar document Sacrosanctum concilium declared that:

Religious singing by the people is to be intelligently fostered so that in devotions and sacred exercises, as also during liturgical services, the voices of the faithful may ring out according to the norms and requirements of the rubrics (SC 118).

How does one “intelligently foster” singing by the people? For a start, we could identify those things that discourage congregational singing. Among these are:

Cantors and choirs who “perform” rather than serve

The Council made it quite clear that the people must be enabled to sing those parts of the mass that are rightly theirs.
Despite the opinions of some liturgical experts, a close reading of this passage does not support the idea that the Council intended to abolish the occasional use of choirs to sing the more elaborate settings of the Mass which belong to the “treasure of sacred music” which the church has inherited. What it did intend is that the people not be robbed of those parts which belong to them, namely “acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs” (SC 30). The main offenders here, then, are not those choirs which professionally do the tasks assigned to them, but those cantors and parish choirs which see their role more in terms of performance than in terms of service. Some cantors sing in an entirely individualistic style which encourages the congregation to listen rather than join in the singing. Some choirs actually see their role as presenting performance items during the liturgy, when their real task is to support the congregation’s singing.

Over amplification of the cantor

Microphones are for performers. Put a microphone in front of most people and their first impulse is to perform. On top of this, when the cantor’s voice drowns out the meagre attempts of the people, the people will stop singing. Given the poor acoustics of most modern churches, some amplification is usually necessary, but it must be very moderate.

Lack of clear instrumental leadership

On the other hand, while voices are usually over amplified, the instrumental accompaniment is usually too weak to give proper leadership. Guitars suffer terribly in this regard, firstly in that most guitar players cannot play the melody of a song, secondly in that guitars do not carry well in a large building without amplification. This is one of the reasons why the organ has been held up as most suitable for leading congregational song. It can give clear, sustained notes at a volume that will carry throughout the church. However, many parish organists have not learnt to play in such a way that gives clear indications to the people about when and how they are to sing. They could learn a great deal from protestant organists in this regard. The role of cantor is practically unknown in Protestant churches – the organist gives most of the guidance.

The choice of song

Many factors are relevant here. Some songs in current circulation are impossible for a congregation to sing, and are more suitable for soloists. Among these are Carey Landry’s Hail Mary Gentle Woman and John Foley’s One Bread, One Body. The difficult timing of both these songs will discourage congregational participation (despite the fact that they are “favourites” and they like to listen to them). Other songs may display the composer’s musical cleverness but result in tunes that are un-natural. A good tune for congregational singing may sound “boring” to a composer, but needs to be predictable enough for the average untrained ear of the average parishioner. Another factor is how much opportunity the people have had to learn the songs they are asked to sing. Changing the songs every week will not encourage singing, whereas repeated use of the same song for three or four weeks will build up confidence.

Melody line for the song

Many hymnals today (such as the excellent Together in Song) include melody lines for the people to follow. Priests who cannot read music may dismiss the importance of this for a congregation, but many of those who are most likely to sing in our parishes are those who can read music (or at least follow the dots) and a melody line always helps to encourage them. Unfortunately this is often unavailable in this age of the overhead projector and the power-point presentation.

Have I failed to build up in my parish a durable foundation of liturgical song?

Liturgical musicians sometimes refer to the range of songs known by a parish as the “parish repertoire”. It is worth each of us sitting down and listing out those songs that are in our own parish repertoire. Include all the songs that the people could reasonably be expected to know. Then ask yourself some questions about this list. Do these songs have lasting merit? Does it reflect the breadth of the Catholic tradition or is it a little “narrow”? Does it reflect a single “style” or “taste”? Do the texts focus too narrowly on a single theological idea? Do we have sufficient material to cover all seasons and liturgical occasions?

The last is a very serious issue. For instance, while most parishes would have a sufficient repertoire for Christmas, the same could not be said for Pentecost. Even Easter – a season that lasts for a full seven weeks – has a rather thin repertoire in most Catholic parishes. The few Easter songs that are known lack the robust resurrection theology (and melodies) of most Protestant hymns for Easter. Since the festivals of the church year repeat themselves every year, it is worth working out a basic minimum of desirable songs for each of the festivals and, over a number of years, using them again and again until they are known. Among these one could see to it that the sequences for Easter and Pentecost are known to easily singable tunes.

One aim of developing the repertoire is that some songs, like the liturgy, should become known by rote. This aim also requires that the songs that we chose as part of our repertoire are worthy of such memorisation, and that they will truly serve the pastoral well-being of he people. Unfortunately, too often today our repertoires are determined by the “market-forces” of the musical publishing houses which are forever pouring out the fast food equivalent of a musical diet.

Have I only taught the children of the parish “children’s” songs?

One final concern is the current trend in our parish schools to teach children’s songs and only children’s songs to children. Children, of course, need special songs aimed at their level,
and there are a number of good composers of children’s songs in Australia (Michael Mangen, for instance). But these songs are not sufficient on their own. Children also need to be taught “adult” songs, the songs they can expect to encounter in the liturgy on Sunday. In this way, their transition from childhood to maturity in the faith is assisted.

Furthermore, children memorise songs with a great deal of ease, which means that what they sing as children will stick fast for the rest of their life. There is both opportunity and risk in this. There is great opportunity for fruitful catechisation through song. Unfortunately, the catechetical effect of singing was better understood in the past than it is today. And hence the risk: most modern children’s songs being sung in our parish schools are not suitable for catechisation, that is, they are not clear and unambiguous expressions of the Church’s faith. Of course, teachers feel under pressure to let the children sing “what they like” rather than what is good for them. We know that parents who let their children eat “what they like” rather than what is good for them end up with unhealthy children. Feeding our children an unhealthy diet of liturgical music is pastorally irresponsible.

**Am I developing musical skills for the future?**

And while on this subject, surely it is in teaching children to produce liturgical music and song that we will reap the greatest reward for our investment of energy. Most parishes today are experiencing difficulty in finding suitable practitioners of liturgical music. This problem will only be overcome by teaching the children of our parish to sing and to play musical instruments, and by incorporating them (“mentoring” and “initiating” them) into the liturgical music program of the parish from an early age. The boys choirs of the past did this admirably. Today, we must expect to have to spend some money as well as effort in this area – perhaps offering parish music scholarships to promising children. It won’t happen without investment.

Many other questions could be added to this musical “examination of conscience” (in fact, I would be interested in receiving your suggestions for fleshing it out further); but ending with the question of training children in liturgical music and song perhaps demonstrates a strong connection with our starting point. We need to be convinced that developing liturgical music and song in our parishes is important – not for purely aesthetic reasons, but primarily for the moral reasons that it belongs to the glorification of God and to healthy pastoral care. It is perhaps when we consider what we are teaching our children that this becomes most clear. We will reap what we sow. If we teach the new generation wisely, we will build the foundations of a sound tradition of liturgical music for tomorrow. If we don’t, we have no one to blame but ourselves when the result is unsatisfactory. The Holy Father’s call to examine our liturgical music is a call to authentic worship and pastoral care. It is a call to repentance for past failures, but like all calls to repentance, it is also a chance for a new start and an offer of hope for the future.

* David Schütz is Executive Officer for the Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Commission of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia, and Director of Music for the Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Ringwood, Victoria. He previously was a senior Minister of the Lutheran Church in Australia.

**Statement of Conclusions ... Continued from page 34**

primary collaborators of the Roman Pontiff. To preserve and ever deepen this communion, the spirit of collaboration experienced in the meeting must continue into the future. The fraternal nature of this exchange of views will assist the regular cooperation between the Holy See and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, and the proposals will provide the context, at least in part, for their collaboration. By building on the good will and sustained efforts of many priests, deacons, religious and lay faithful, the Church in Australia will live out with ever greater fidelity the mystery of Christ in communion with the universal Church.

The bishops, as devoted shepherds of the Church in Australia, are well aware of its strengths and its weaknesses, and remain deeply committed to its service. They are confident that, with the assistance of the theological community and so many loyal priests, religious and lay faithful, along with the support and guidance of the Holy See, they will be well prepared to meet the challenges that confront them.

This common labour is before all else a cooperation with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, each one praying for the wisdom always to give first consideration to the honour of God and the salvation of souls, and by begging for the strength needed for the task of building up the Body of Christ, so that all efforts may bear abundant fruit for the mission of the Church in Australia and beyond.

**Signatories**

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger  
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith  
Jorge Cardinal Medina Estévez  
Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments  
Lucas Cardinal Moreira Neves  
Congregation for Bishops  
Dario Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos  
Congregation for Clergy  
Eduardo Cardinal Martínez Somalo  
Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life  
Pio Cardinal Laghi  
Congregation for Catholic Education  
Edward Cardinal Clancy  
President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
Most Reverend Barry Hickey  
Chairman of the Committee for Liturgy  
Most Reverend Brian Heenan  
Chairman of the Committee for Clergy and Religious  
Most Reverend Michael Putney  
Chairman of the Committee for Doctrine and Morals  
Most Reverend James Foley  
Chairman of the Committee for Education  
Most Reverend Edmund Collins  
Chairman of the Committee for Evangelization and Missions
Theology of the Liturgy

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

This article is a translation by Margaret McHugh and Rev John Parsons of a lecture delivered in French by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Benedictine Monastery of Notre Dame, Fontgombault, France. It develops earlier themes of his on understanding the sacrifice of the Mass that bring together understandings drawn from recent Scriptural scholarship and the definitions of the Council of Trent. The Cardinal critiques both defective contemporary understandings and those promoted in classical Protestantism to give a contemporary defence of the Tradition of the Church. This includes a defence of the Novus Ordo of Pope Paul VI.

Introduction

The Second Vatican Council defined the liturgy as “the work of Christ the Priest and of His Body which is the Church.” The work of Jesus Christ is referred to in the same text as the work of the redemption which Christ accomplished especially by the Paschal Mystery of His Passion, of His Resurrection from the dead and His glorious Ascension.

“All that has become foreign to modern thinking and, only thirty years after the Council, has been brought into question even among catholic liturgists. Who still talks today about “the divine Sacrifice of the Eucharist”; Discussions about the idea of sacrifice have again become astonishingly lively, as much on the catholic side as on the protestant. People realise that an idea which has always preoccupied, under various forms, not only the history of the Church, but the entire history of humanity, must be the expression of something basic which concerns us as well. But, at the same time, the old Enlightenment positions still live on everywhere: accusations of magic and paganism, contrasts drawn between worship and the service of the Word, between rite and ethos, the idea of a Christianity which disengages itself from worship and enters into the profane world, catholic theologians who have no desire to want, in one way or another, to rediscover the concept of sacrifice, embarrassment and criticism are the end result. Thus, Stefan Orth, in the vast panorama of a bibliography of recent works devoted to the theme of sacrifice, believed he could make the following statement as a summary of his research: “In fact, many Catholics themselves today ratify the verdict and the conclusions of Martin Luther, who says that to speak of sacrifice is ‘the greatest and most appalling horror’ and a ‘damnable impiety’: this is why we want to refrain from all that smacks of sacrifice, including the whole canon, and retain only that which is pure and holy.”

All that has become foreign to modern thinking and, only thirty years after the Council, has been brought into question even among catholic liturgists. Who still talks today about “the divine Sacrifice of the Eucharist”?

If we go back to Vatican II, we find the following description of this relationship: “In the liturgy, through which, especially in the divine Sacrifice of the Eucharist, ‘the work of our Redemption is carried on’, the faithful are most fully led to express and show to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.”

Sacrifice called into question

In reality, the two meanings are inseparably linked: the Death and Resurrection of Christ, the Paschal Mystery, are not just exterior, historic events. In the case of the Resurrection this is very clear. It is joined to and penetrates history, but transcends it in two ways: it is not the action of a man, but an action of God, and in that way carries the risen Jesus beyond history, to that place where He sits at the right hand of the Father. But the Cross is not a merely human action either. The purely human aspect is present in the people who led Jesus to the Cross. For Jesus Himself, the Cross is not primarily an action, but a passion, and a passion which signifies that He is but one with the Divine Will – a union, the dramatic character of which is shown to us in the Garden of Gethsemane. Thus the passive dimension of being put to death is transformed into the active dimension of love: death becomes the abandonment of Himself to the Father for men. In this way, the horizon extends, as it does in the Resurrection, well beyond the purely human aspect and well beyond the fact of having been nailed to a cross and having died. This element additional to the mere historical event is what the language of faith calls a “mystery” and it has condensed into the term “Paschal Mystery” the most innermost core of the redemptive event. If we can say from this that the “Paschal Mystery” constitutes the core of “the work of Jesus,” then the connection with the liturgy is immediately clear: it is precisely this “work of Jesus” which is the real content of the liturgy. In it, through the faith and the prayer of the Church, the “work of Jesus” is continually brought into contact with history in order to penetrate it. Thus, in the liturgy, the merely human historical event is transcended over and over again and is part of the divine and human action which is the Redemption. In it, Christ is the true subject/bearer: it is the work of Christ; but in it He draws history to Himself, precisely in this permanent action in which our salvation takes place.

Introduction

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“By this Mystery, in dying He has destroyed our death, and in rising He has restored life.” At first sight, in these two sentences, the phrase “the work of Christ” seems to have been used in two different senses. “The work of Christ” refers first of all to the historical, redemptive actions of Jesus, His Death and His Resurrection; on the other hand, the celebration of the liturgy is called “the work of Christ.”

In reality, the two meanings are inseparably linked: the Death and Resurrection of Christ, the Paschal Mystery, are not just exterior, historic events. In the case of the Resurrection this is very clear. It is joined to and penetrates history, but transcends it in two ways: it is not the action of a man, but an action of God, and in that way carries the risen Jesus beyond history, to that place where He sits at the right hand of the Father. But the Cross is not a merely human action either. The purely human aspect is present in the people who led Jesus to the Cross. For Jesus Himself, the Cross is not primarily an action, but a passion, and a passion which signifies that He is but one with the Divine Will – a union, the dramatic character of which is shown to us in the Garden of Gethsemane. Thus the passive dimension of being put to death is transformed into the active dimension of love: death becomes the abandonment of Himself to the Father for men. In this way, the horizon extends, as it does in the Resurrection, well beyond the purely human aspect and well beyond the fact of having been nailed to a cross and having died. This element additional to the mere historical event is what the language of faith calls a “mystery” and it has condensed into the term “Paschal Mystery” the most innermost core of the redemptive event. If we can say from this that the “Paschal Mystery” constitutes the core of “the work of Jesus,” then the connection with the liturgy is immediately clear: it is precisely this “work of Jesus” which is the real content of the liturgy. In it, through the faith and the prayer of the Church, the “work of Jesus” is continually brought into contact with history in order to penetrate it. Thus, in the liturgy, the merely human historical event is transcended over and over again and is part of the divine and human action which is the Redemption. In it, Christ is the true subject/bearer: it is the work of Christ; but in it He draws history to Himself, precisely in this permanent action in which our salvation takes place.
I certainly don’t need to say that I am not one of the “numerous Catholics” who consider it the most appalling horror and a damnable impiety to speak of the sacrifice of the Mass. It goes without saying that the writer did not mention my book on the spirit of the liturgy, which analyses the idea of sacrifice in detail. His diagnosis remains dismaying. Is it true? I do not know these numerous Catholics who consider it a damnable impiety to understand the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The second, more circumspect, diagnosis according to which the sacrifice of the Mass is open to misunderstandings is, on the other hand, easily shown to be correct. Even if one leaves to one side the first affirmation of the writer as a rhetorical exaggeration, there remains a troubling problem, which we should face up to. A sizable party of catholic liturgists seems to have practically arrived at the conclusion that Luther, rather than Trent, was substantially right in the sixteenth century debate; one can detect much the same position in the post conciliar discussions on the Priesthood. The great historian of the Council of Trent, Hubert Jedin, pointed this out in 1975, in the preface to the last volume of his history of the Council of Trent: “The attentive reader ... in reading this will not be less dismayed than the author, when he realises that many of the things - in fact almost everything – that disturbed the men of the past is being put forward anew today.” It is only against this background of the effective denial of the authority of Trent, that the bitterness of the struggle against allowing the celebration of Mass according to the 1962 Missal, after the liturgical reform, can be understood. The possibility of so celebrating constitutes the strongest, and thus (for them) the most intolerable contradiction of the opinion of those who believe that the faith in the Eucharist formulated by Trent has lost its value.

It would be easy to gather proofs to support this statement of the position. I leave aside the extreme liturgical theology of Harald Schützeichel, who departs completely from catholic dogma and expounds, for example, the bold assertion that it was only in the Middle Ages that the idea of the Real Presence was invented. A modern liturgist such as David N. Power tells us that through the course of history, not only the manner in which a truth is expressed, but also the content of what is expressed, can lose its meaning. He links his theory in concrete terms with the statements of Trent. Theodore Schnitker tells us that an up-to-date liturgy includes both a different expression of the faith and theological changes. Moreover, according to him, there are theologians, at least in the circles of the Roman Church and of her liturgy, who have not yet grasped the full import of the transformations put forward by the liturgical reform in the area of the doctrine of the faith. R. Meßner’s certainly respectable work on the reform of the Mass carried out by Martin Luther, and on the Eucharist in the early Church, which contains many interesting ideas, arrives nonetheless at the conclusion that the early Church was better understood by Luther than by the Council of Trent.

The serious nature of these theories comes from the fact that frequently they pass immediately into practice. The thesis according to which it is the community itself which is the subject of the liturgy, serves as an authorization to manipulate the liturgy according to each individual’s understanding of it. So-called new discoveries and the forms which follow from them, are diffused with an astonishing rapidity and with a degree of conformity which has long ceased to exist where the norms of ecclesiastical authority are concerned. Theories, in the area of the liturgy, are transformed very rapidly today into practice, and practice, in turn, creates or destroys ways of behaving and thinking.

Meanwhile the problem has been aggravated by the fact that the most recent movement of ‘enlightened’ thought goes much further than Luther: where Luther still took literally the accounts of the Institution and made them, as the norma normans, the basis of his efforts at reform, the hypotheses of historical criticism have, for a long time, been causing a broad erosion of the texts. The accounts of the Last Supper appear as the product of the liturgical construction of the community; an historical Jesus is sought behind the texts which could not have been thinking of the gift of His Body and Blood, nor understood His Cross as a sacrifice of expiation; we should, rather, imagine a farewell meal which included an eschatological perspective. Not only is the authority of the ecclesiastical magisterium downgraded in the eyes of many, but Scripture too; in its place are put changing pseudo-historical hypotheses, which are immediately replaced by any arbitrary idea, and place the liturgy at the mercy of fashion. Where, on the basis of such ideas, the liturgy is manipulated ever more freely, the faithful feel that, in reality, nothing is celebrated, and it is understandable that they desert the liturgy, and with it the Church.

**Principles of theological research**

Let us return to the fundamental question: is it correct to describe the liturgy as a divine sacrifice, or is it a damnable impiety? In this discussion, one must first of all establish the principle presuppositions which, in any event, determine the reading of Scripture, and thus the conclusions which one draws from it. For the catholic Christian, two lines of essential hermeneutic orientation assert themselves here. The first: we trust Scripture and we base ourselves on Scripture, not on hypothetical reconstructions which go behind it, and, according to their own taste, reconstruct a history in which the presumptious idea of our knowing what can or can not be attributed to Jesus plays a key role; which, of course, means attributing to him only what a modern scholar is happy to attribute to a man belonging to a time which the scholar himself has reconstructed.

The second is that we read Scripture in the living community of the Church, and therefore on the basis of the fundamental decisions thanks to which it has become historically efficacious, namely, those which laid the foundations of the Church. One must not separate the text from this living context. In this sense, Scripture and Tradition form an inseparable whole, and it is this that Luther, at the dawn of the awakening of historical awareness, could not see. He believed that a text could only have one meaning, but such univocity does not exist, and modern historiography has long since abandoned the idea. That in the nascent Church, the Eucharist was, from the beginning, understood as a sacrifice, even in a text such as the Didache, which is so difficult and marginal vis-à-vis the great Tradition, is an interpretative key of primary importance.
But there is another fundamental hermeneutical aspect in the reading and the interpretation of biblical testimony. The fact that I can, or cannot, recognize a sacrifice in the Eucharist as our Lord instituted it, depends most essentially on the question of knowing what I understand by sacrifice, therefore on what is called precomprehension. The pre-comprehension of Luther, for example, in particular his conception of the relation between the Old and the New Testaments, his conception of the event and of the historic presence of the Church, was such that the category of sacrifice, as he saw it, could not appear other than as an impiety when applied to the Eucharist and the Church. The debates to which Stefan Orth refers show how confused and muddled is the idea of sacrifice among almost all authors, and clearly shows how much work must be done here. For the believing theologian, it is clear that it is Scripture itself which must teach him the essential definition of sacrifice, and that will come from a “canonical” reading of the Bible, in which the Scripture is read in its unity and its dynamic movement, the different stages of which receive their final meaning from Christ, to Whom this whole movement leads. By this same standard the hermeneutic here presupposed is a hermeneutic of faith, founded on faith’s internal logic. Ought not the fact to be obvious? Without faith, Scripture itself is not Scripture, but rather an ill-assorted ensemble of bits of literature which cannot claim any normative significance today.

**Sacrifice and Easter**

The task alluded to here far exceeds, obviously, the limits of one lecture; so allow me to refer you to my book on “The Spirit of the Liturgy” in which I have sought to give the main outlines of this question. What emerges from it is that, in its course through the history of religions and biblical history, the idea of sacrifice has connotations which go well beyond the area of discussion which we habitually associate with the idea of sacrifice. In fact, it opens the doorway to a global understanding of worship and of the liturgy: these are the great perspectives which I would like to try to point out here. Also I necessarily have to omit here particular questions of exegesis, in particular the fundamental problem of the accounts of the Institution, on the subject of which, in addition to my book on the liturgy, I have tried to provide some thoughts in my contribution on “The Eucharist and Mission”.

There is, however, a remark which I cannot refrain from making. In the bibliographic review mentioned, Stefan Orth says that the fact of having avoided after Vatican II, the idea of sacrifice, has “led people to think of divine worship in terms of the feast of the Passover related in the accounts of the Last Supper”. At first sight this wording appears ambiguous: is one to think of divine worship in terms of the Last Supper narratives, or in terms of the Passover, to which those narratives refer in giving a chronological framework, but which they do not otherwise describe. It would be right to say that the Jewish Passover, the institution of which is related in Exodus 12, acquires a new meaning in the New Testament. It is there that is manifested a great historical movement which goes from the beginnings right up to the Last Supper, the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus. But what is astonishing above all in Orth’s presentation is the opposition posited between the idea of sacrifice and the Passover. The Jewish Old Testament deprives Orth’s thesis of meaning, because from the law of Deuteronomy on, the slaughtering of lambs is linked to the temple; and even in the earliest period, when the Passover was still a family feast, the slaughtering of lambs already had a sacrificial character. Thus, precisely through the tradition of the Passover, the idea of sacrifice is carried right up to the words and gestures of the Last Supper, where it is present also on the basis of a second Old Testament passage, Exodus 24, which relates the conclusion of the Covenant at Sinai. There, it is related that the people were sprinkled with the blood of the victims previously brought, and that Moses said on this occasion: “This is the blood of the Covenant which Yahweh makes with you in accordance with all these provisions” (Ex. 24:8). The new Christian Passover is thus expressly interpreted in the accounts of the Last Supper as a sacrificial event, and on the basis of the words of the Last Supper, the nascent Church knew that the Cross was a sacrifice, because the Last Supper would be an empty gesture without the reality of the Cross and of the Resurrection, which is anticipated in it and made accessible for all time in its interior content.

I mention this strange opposition between the Passover and sacrifice, because it represents the architectonic principle of a book recently published by the Society of St. Pius X, claiming that a dogmatic rupture exists between the new liturgy of Paul VI and the preceding catholic liturgical tradition. This rupture is seen precisely in the fact that everything is interpreted henceforth on the basis of the “paschal mystery,” instead of the redeeming sacrifice of expiation of Christ; the category of the paschal mystery is said to be the heart of the liturgical reform, and it is precisely that which appears to be the proof of the rupture with the classical doctrine of the Church. It is clear that there are authors who lay themselves open to such a misunderstanding; but that it is a misunderstanding is completely evident for those who look more closely. In reality, the term “paschal mystery” clearly refers to the realities which took place in the days following Holy Thursday up until the morning of Easter Sunday: the Last Supper as the anticipation of the Cross, the drama of Golgotha and the Lord’s Resurrection. In the expression “paschal mystery” these happenings are seen synthetically as a single, united event, as “the work of Christ,” as we heard the Council say at the beginning, which took place historically and at the same time transcends that precise point in time. As this event is, inwardly, an act of worship rendered to God, it could become divine worship, and in that way be present to all times. The paschal theology of the New Testament, upon which we have cast a quick glance, gives us to understand precisely this: the seemingly profane episode of the Crucifixion of Christ is a sacrifice of expiation, a saving act of the reconciling love of God made man. The theology of the Passover is a theology of the redemption, a liturgy of expiatory sacrifice. The Shepherd has become a Lamb. The vision of the lamb, which appears in the story of Isaac, the lamb which gets entangled in the undergrowth and ransoms the son, has become a reality; the Lord became a Lamb; He allows Himself to be bound and sacrificed, to deliver us.
All this has become very foreign to contemporary thought. Reparation (“expiation”) can perhaps mean something within the limits of human conflicts and the settling of guilt which holds sway among human beings, but its transposition to the relationship between God and man can not work. This, surely, is largely the result of the fact that our image of God has grown dim, has come close to desism. One can no longer imagine that human offences can wound God, and even less that they could necessitate an expiation such as that which constitutes the Cross of Christ. The same applies to vicarious substitution: we can hardly still imagine anything in that category – our image of man has become too individualistic for that. Thus the crisis of the liturgy has its basis in central ideas about man. In order to overcome it, it does not suffice to banalise the liturgy and transform it into a simple gathering at a fraternal meal. But how can we escape from these disorientations? How can we recover the meaning of this immense thing which is at the heart of the message of the Cross and of the Resurrection? In the final analysis, not through theories and scholarly reflections, but only through conversion, by a radical change of life. It is, however, possible to single out some things which open the way to this change of heart, and I would like to put forward some suggestions in that direction, in three stages.

Love, the heart of sacrifice

The first stage should be a preliminary question on the essential meaning of the word “sacrifice.” People commonly consider sacrifice as the destruction of something precious in the eyes of man; in destroying it, man wants to consecrate this reality to God, to recognise His sovereignty. In fact, however, a destruction does not honour God. The slaughtering of animals or whatever else, can’t honour God. “If I am hungry, I will not tell you, because the world is mine and all it contains. Am I going to eat the flesh of bulls, shall I drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, fulfil your vows to the Most High,” says God to Israel in Psalm 50 (49); 12-14. What then does sacrifice consist of? Not in destruction, not in this or that thing, but in the transformation of man. In the fact that he becomes himself conformed to God. He becomes conformed to God when he becomes love.

“That is why true sacrifice is every work which allows us to unite ourselves to God in a holy fellowship,” as Augustine puts it.

With this key from the New Testament, Augustine interprets the Old Testament sacrifices as symbols pointing to this sacrifice properly so called, and that is why, he says, worship had to be transformed, the symbol had to disappear in favour of the reality. “All the divine prescriptions of Scripture which concern the sacrifices of the tabernacle or of the temple, are figures which refer to the love of God and neighbour” (de civitate Dei X,5). But Augustine also knows that love only becomes true when it leads a man to God, and thus directs him to his true end; it alone can likewise bring about unity of men among themselves. Therefore the concept of sacrifice refers to community, and the first definition which Augustine attempted, is broadened by the following statement: “The whole redeemed human community, that is to say the assembly and the community of the saints, is offered to God in sacrifice by the High Priest Who offered Himself” (ibid X,6). And even more simply: “This sacrifice is ourselves,” or again: “Such is the Christian sacrifice: the multitude – a single body in Christ” (ibid X, 6). Sacrifice consists then, we shall say it once more, in a process of transformation, in the conformity of man to God, in His theiosis, as the Fathers would say. It consists, to express it in modern phraseology, in the abolition of difference – in the union between God and man, between God and creation: “God all in all” (1 Cor. 15; 28).

But how does this process which makes us become love and one single body with Christ, which makes us become one with God, take place; how does this abolition of difference happen? There exists here first of all a clear boundary between the religions founded on the faith of Abraham on one hand, on the other hand the other forms of religion such as we find them particularly in Asia, and also those based, probably, on Asiatic traditions – in the plotinian style of neoplatonism. There, union signifies deliverance as far as finitude (self awareness) is concerned, which in the final analysis is seen to be a façade, the abolition of myself in the ocean of the completely other which, as compared to our world of façades, is nothingness, which, nonetheless, is the only true being. In the Christian faith, which fulfils the faith of Abraham, union is seen in a completely different way: it is the union of love, in which differences are not destroyed, but are transformed in a higher union of those who love each other, just as it is found, as in an archetype, in the trinitarian union of God. Whereas, for example in Plotinus, finitude is a falling away from unity, and so to speak the kernel of sin and therefore at the same time the kernel of all evil, the Christian faith does not see finitude as a negation but as a creation, the fruit of a divine will which creates a free partner, a creature who does not have to be destroyed, but must be completed, must insert itself into the free act of love. Difference is not abolished, but becomes the means to a higher unity. This philosophy of liberty, which is at the basis of the Christian faith and differentiates it from the Asiatic religions, includes the possibility of the negative. Evil is not a mere falling away from being, but the consequence of a freedom used badly. The way of unity, the way of love, is then a way of conversion, a way of purification: it takes the shape of the Cross, it passes through the Paschal Mystery, through death and resurrection. It needs the Mediator, Who, in His Death and in His Resurrection becomes for us the way, draws us all to Himself and thus fulfils us (Jn. 12; 32).

Let us cast a glance back over what we have said. In his definition: sacrifice equals love, Augustine rightly stresses the saying, which is present in different variations in the Old and in the New Testament, which he cites from Hosea: “it is love that I want, not sacrifices” (6,6; St. Augustine, de civitate Dei X,5). But this saying does not merely place an opposition between ethos and worship – then Christianity would be reduced to a moralism. It refers to a process which is more than a moral philosophy – to a process in which God takes the initiative. He alone can arouse man to start out towards love. It is the love with which God loves, which alone makes our love towards Him increase. This fact of being loved is a process of purification and transformation, in which we are not only open to God, but united to each other. The initiative of God has a name: Jesus Christ, the
Finally I would like to point out very briefly a third way that the immolation animals, to the true sacrifice, the communion with the offering of Christ, progressively becomes clearer. Among the prophets before the exile, there was an extraordinarily harsh criticism of temple worship, which Stephen, to the horror of the doctors and priests of the temple, resumes in his great discourse, with some citations, notably this verse of Amos: “Did you offer victims and sacrifices to Me, during forty years in the desert, house of Israel? But you have carried the tent of Moloch and the star of the god Rephan, the images which you had made to worship” (Amos 5; 25, Acts 7; 42). This critique that the Prophets had made, provided the spiritual foundation that enabled Israel to get through the difficult time following the destruction of the Temple, when there was no worship. Israel was obliged at that time to bring to light more deeply and in a new way what constitutes the essence of worship, expiation, sacrifice. In the time of the Hellenistic dictatorship, when Israel was again without temple and without sacrifice, the book of Daniel gives us this prayer: “Lord, see how we are the smallest of all the nations...There is no longer, at this time, leader nor prophet...nor holocaust, sacrifice, oblation, nor incense, no place to offer You the first fruits and find grace close to You. But may a broken soul and a humbled spirit be accepted by You, like holocausts of rams and bulls, like thousands of fattened lambs; thus may our sacrifice be before You today, and may it please You that we may follow You wholeheartedly, because there is no confounding for those who hope in You. And now we put our whole heart into following You, to fearing You and seeking Your Face” (Dan. 3; 37-41).

Thus gradually there matured the realisation that prayer, the word, the man at prayer and becoming himself word, is the true sacrifice. The struggle of Israel could here enter into fruitful contact with the search of the Hellenistic world, which itself was looking for a way to leave behind the worship of substitution, of the immolation of animals, in order to arrive at worship properly so called, at true adoration, at true sacrifice. This path led to the idea of logike tysia – of the sacrifice [consisting] in the word – which we meet in the New Testament in Rm. 12; 1, where the Apostle exhorts the believers “to offer themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God”: it is what is described as logike latreia, as a divine service according to the word, engaging the reason. We find the same thing, in another form, in Heb. 13; 15: “Through Him – Christ – let us offer ceaselessly a sacrifice of praise, that is to say the fruit of the lips which confess His name.” Numerous examples coming from the Fathers of the Church show how these ideas were extended and became the point of junction between christology, Eucharistic faith and the putting into existential practice of the paschal mystery. I would like to cite, by way of example, just a few lines of St Peter Chrysologos; really, one should read the whole sermon in question in its entirety in order to be able to follow this synthesis from one end to the other. “It is a strange sacrifice, where the body offers itself without the body, the blood without the blood! I beg you – says the Apostle – by the mercy of God, to offer yourselves as a living victim. Brothers, this sacrifice is inspired by the example of Christ, who immolated His Body, so that men may live ... Become, man, become the sacrifice of God and his priest ... God looks for faith, not for death. He thirsts for your promise, not your blood. Fervour appeases Him, not murder.”

God Who Himself became man and gives Himself to us. That is why Augustine could synthesize all that by saying: “Such is the sacrifice of Christians: the multitude is one single body in Christ. The Church celebrates this mystery by the sacrifice of the Altar, well known to believers, because in it, it is shown to her in the things which she offers, it is she herself who is offered” (Ibid. X, 6). Anyone who has understood this, will no longer be of the opinion that to speak of the sacrifice of the Mass is at least highly ambiguous, and even an appalling horror. On the contrary: if we do not remember this, we lose sight of the grandeur of that which God gives us in the Eucharist.

**The new temple**

I would now like to mention, again very briefly, two other approaches. An important indication is given, in my opinion, in the scene of the purification of the temple, in particular in the form handed down by John – who, in fact, relates a phrase of Jesus which doesn’t appear in the Synoptics except in the trial of Jesus, on the lips of false witnesses, and in a distorted way. The reaction of Jesus to the merchants and money changers in the temple was practically an attack on the immolation of animals, which were offered there, hence an attack on the existing form of worship, and the existing form of sacrifice in general. That is why the competent Jewish authorities asked Him, with good reason, by what sign He justified an action which could only be taken as an attack against the law of Moses and the sacred prescriptions of the Covenant. Thereupon Jesus replies: “Destroy (dissolve) this sanctuary; in three days I will build it up again” (Jn. 2, 19). This subtle formula evokes a vision which John himself says the disciples did not understand until after the Resurrection, in remembering what had happened, and which led them to “believe the Scripture and the word of Jesus” (Jn. 2, 22). For they now understand that the temple had been abolished at the moment of the Crucifixion of Jesus: Jesus, according to John, was crucified exactly at the moment when the paschal lambs were immolated in the sanctuary. At the moment when the Son makes himself the lamb, that is, gives himself freely to the Father and hence to us, an end is made of the old prescriptions of a worship that could only be a sign of the true realities. The temple is “destroyed”. From now on His resurrected body – He Himself – becomes the true temple of humanity, in which adoration in spirit and in truth takes place (Jn. 4, 23). But spirit and truth are not abstract philosophical concepts – He is Himself the truth, and the spirit is the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from Him. Here too, it thus clearly becomes apparent that worship is not replaced by a moral philosophy, but that the ancient worship comes to an end, with its substitutes and its often tragic misunderstandings, because the reality itself is manifested, the new temple: the resurrected Christ who draws us, transforms us and unites us to Himself. Again it is clear that the Eucharist of the Church – to use Augustine’s term – is the sacramentum of the true sacrificium – the sacred sign in which that which is signified is produced.

**Spiritual sacrifice**

Finally I would like to point out very briefly a third way in which the passage from the worship of substitution,
Here too, it is a question of something quite different from a mere moralism, because man is so caught up in it with the whole of his being: sacrifice [consisting] in words – this, the Greek thinkers had already put in relation to the logos, to the word itself, indicating that the sacrifice of prayer should not be mere speech, but the transmutation of our being into the logos, the union of ourselves with it. Divine worship implies that we ourselves become beings of the word, that we conform ourselves to the creative Intellect. But once more, it is clear that we cannot do this of ourselves, and thus everything seems to end again in futility – until the day when the Word comes, the true, the Son, when He becomes flesh and draws us to Himself in the exodus of the Cross. This true sacrifice, which transforms us all into sacrifice, that is to say unites us to God, makes of us beings conformed to God, is indeed fixed and founded on an historical event, but is not situated as a thing in the past behind us, on the contrary, it becomes contemporary and accessible to us in the community of the believing and praying Church, in its sacrament: that is what is meant by the “sacrifice of the Mass”. The error of Luther lay, I am convinced, in a false idea of historicity, in a poor understanding of unicity. The sacrifice of Christ is not situated behind us as something past. It touches all times and is present to us. The Eucharist is not merely the distribution of what comes from the past, but rather the presence of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, Who transcends and unites all times. If the Roman Canon cites Abel, Abraham, Melchisedech, including them among those who celebrate the Eucharist, it is in the conviction that in them also, the great offerers, Christ was passing though time – or perhaps better, that in their search they were advancing toward a meeting with Christ. The theology of the Fathers such as we find it in the canon, did not deny the futility and insufficiency of the pre-christian sacrifices; the canon includes, however, with the figures of Abel and Melchisedech, the “holy pagans” themselves in the mystery of Christ. What is happening is that everything that went before is seen in its insufficiency as a shadow, but also that Christ is drawing all things to Himself, that there is, even in the pagan world, a preparation for the Gospel, that even imperfect elements can lead to Christ, however much they may stand in need of purification.

Christ, the subject of the liturgy

Which brings me to the conclusion. Theology of the liturgy means that God acts through Christ in the liturgy and that we cannot act but through Him and with Him. Of ourselves, we cannot construct the way to God. This way does not open up unless God Himself becomes the way. And again, the ways of man which do not lead to God are non-ways. Theology of the liturgy means furthermore that in the liturgy, the Logos Himself speaks to us; and not only does He speak, He comes with His Body, and His Soul, His Flesh and His Blood, His Divinity and His Humanity, in order to unite us to Himself, to make of us one single “body.” In the Christian liturgy, the whole history of salvation, even more, the whole history of human searching for God is present, assumed and brought to its goal. The Christian liturgy is a cosmic liturgy – it embraces the whole of creation which “awaits with impatience the revelation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:9).

Trent did not make a mistake, it learnt for support on the solid foundation of the Tradition of the Church. It remains a trustworthy standard. But we can and should understand it in a more profound way in drawing from the riches of biblical witness and from the faith of the Church of all the ages. There are true signs of hope that this renewed and deepened understanding of Trent can, in particular through the intermediary of the Eastern Churches, be made accessible to protestant Christians.

One thing should be clear: the liturgy must not be a terrain for experimenting with theological hypotheses. Too rapidly, in these last decades, the ideas of experts have entered into liturgical practice, often also by-passing ecclesiastical authority, through the channel of commissions which have been able to diffuse at an international level their “consensus of the moment,” and practically turn it into laws for liturgical activity. The liturgy derives its greatness from what it is, not from what we make of it. Our participation is, of course, necessary, but as a means of inserting ourselves humbly into the spirit of the liturgy, and of serving Him Who is the true subject of the liturgy: Jesus Christ. The liturgy is not an expression of the consciousness of a community which, in any case, is diffuse and changing. It is revelation received in faith and prayer, and its measure is consequently the faith of the Church, in which revelation is received. The forms which are given to the liturgy can vary according to place and time, just as the rites are diverse. What is essential is the link to the Church which for her part, is united by faith in the Lord. The obedience of faith guarantees the unity of the liturgy, beyond the frontiers of place and time, and so lets us experience the unity of the Church, the Church as the homeland of the heart.

The essence of the liturgy, is finally, summarised in the prayer which St. Paul (1 Cor. 16, 22) and the Didache (10: 6) have handed down to us: “Maranatha – our Lord is there – Lord, come!” From now on, the Parousia is accomplished in the Liturgy, but that is so precisely because it teaches us to cry: “Come Lord Jesus”, while reaching out towards the Lord who is coming. It always brings us to hear his reply yet again and to experience its truth: “Yes, I am coming soon” (Apoc. 22:17, 20).

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**Metaphysics of the Eucharist …**

**Continued from page 25**

complete reality of the substance of the bread (matter and form; essence and existence) into the reality of Christ’s body which is in heaven: but in such a way that, as a result of this passing over, the accidents are not left hollow symbols of Christ in heaven, but are filled as really containing him who is locally there, yet also here, non-locally, non-naturally, really, uniquely, sacramentally, miraculously, per modum substantiae. We could imagine a passing over of the reality of the bread into the reality of Christ’s body, leaving the accidents an empty envelope. It would be a transubstantiation. But it would not result in the real presence of Christ in the host. It would not be the Eucharistic transubstantiation which our Catholic faith believes.
Metaphysics of the Eucharist

Father William Bardon, O.P.

The magnificent Latin/English edition of the Summa Theologiae of St Thomas Aquinas published in 1965 by Eyre and Spottiswoode of London for Blackfriars contains in volume 58 that treats the Eucharistic Presence (St Thomas’s 3a.73-78) an excellent essay by the volume editor that is here reproduced. The essay presents a sublime metaphysics of Eucharistic presence that is local, yet also non-local, non-natural, real, unique, sacramental, miraculous, and per modum substantiae. Section headings are by the present Editor.

Physical instrumental cause

In Thomist sacramental theology the philosophical idea of physical instrumental cause plays a commanding role. And indeed this is only one field in which this idea holds a key position. In the general field of the relationship between the first cause and creatures in their activity, the theology of St Thomas sees the creature, the secondary cause, not only as a principal cause but also as an instrument in the hand of God. In the field of Christology it sees the holy humanity of Christ as God’s instrument to product miraculous effects and effects in the order of grace; also it sees all things held in existence by God using the self-same holy humanity as his instrument. Then again in the field of Biblical authorship it regards the inspired writer, who is the principal though secondary cause of his book in so far as it is justly regarded as his book, as also being the instrumental cause of the sacramental character (and the modifications thereof) and of sacramental grace within the soul of the liturgical initiate.

The Eucharist is the supreme sacrament – to which all the others are ordered – their consummation and their crown. Here sacramentality is at its fullest and richest. Here we have a sign, not merely that Christ is with us in all the power of his sanctifying action, but also that he is amongst us in the power of his transubstantiating action, in the glory of his offering that body into which the bread of the adoring, offering Christ, in all the undisturbed grace–actually uses the sacramental appearances of the bread and wine as his physical instrument at the moment when we partake of Holy Communion, is a moot point. At all events, in the Eucharist, as in the other sacraments, the theory of instrumental cause plays its part, certainly in the elucidation of the presence of Christ as agent of the transubstantiating change which brings the presence of the adoring, offering Christ, in all the undisturbed glory of his offering that body into which the bread is being changed, Christ is really, abidingly present as substance is contained within accidents; Christ is really but momentarily present as efficient cause using instrumental cause.

Value of the work of Christ

Theologies of a less realist complexion will, of course, admit that the effect of the transubstantiating action is a real presence of Christ; they will not always recognise, with followers of St Thomas, that the source of the transubstantiating action is also a real, though a fleeting, presence of Christ in the exercise of effective power. This goes back to a difference in Christologies. The spirit of St Thomas is a robust, physical realism – throughout this discussion the word metaphysical might be better than physical. There is another approach in which the psychological and moral values of the Christ-achievement are everything. Christ knows, Christ loves, Christ merits, Christ prays. That is capital. These values are not absent from St Thomas’s theology. Indeed, they are paramount. But there are other exciting relationships to Christ. He touches us. And from the touch of his holy humanity power streams out. That was the situation in the days of his mortal flesh and indeed in those strange forty days of his visible, tangible, appearances amongst us. But now from where he is, on the other side of the veil, power streams out from him on to us. This is a touch, a real touch, not a bodily propinquity but a spiritual contact which dispenses with the need for local presence.

Relationship between theology of the person of Christ and sacramental theology

So it is that differences in Christology will involve differences in sacramentology too. If the man Jesus is seen as physically radiating power, our encounter with him in all the sacramental celebrations will take place on a plane of physical realism as well as on that of faith and of moral value. So it is that the view of the sacred humanity being used always by the Blessed Trinity as the instrument in that production of grace and of other effects finds a natural corollary that it is also used in the Eucharist as the instrumental cause of the miracle of transubstantiation and in the production of the sacramental effects. And as such it has as a subordinate instrument the liturgical celebrant and the sacramental rite at the moment of the transubstantiating
action. The priest and the faithful with him encounter the high-priest of their oblation at the moment when that high-priest is using his subordinate – his representative – his vicar, to change the bread and wine into his body and blood. That is the mode of his coming amongst them in all the glory of his priestly giving; he will remain amongst them, abidingly, in all the reality of his body given and his blood poured out, in another mode of presence that results from that.

Metaphysics of instrumental causality

Let us look at the metaphysics of instrumental causality. God is the first efficient cause and the ultimate final cause of all that is. He is also the supreme pattern or exemplar cause of all. He is pure being. The shadow of limitation falls on the being of all others. He [God] is existence. They [creatures] have existence. He [God] cannot not be. They [creatures] can not be. [The grammar is turgid: it is possible for a creature not to “be” it is impossible for the Creator not to “be” (Ed.)] Every moment of their existence can be seen as a coming into existence. Yet things too are causes. In a true sense they have effects and bring other things into being. There is in their nature a power in some way proportioned to their effect. A father generates his son. He is a true cause, a principal cause, although only a secondary cause, because all that he has he has from the first, the transcendent, the metaphysical cause. The whole order of physical causes has a metaphysical background or underground which supports and causes it. Causes in the physical order are secondary causes, and there is a first cause that causes their very causality, yet so causing it that it is genuine causality, and in the case of voluntary agents so causing it that it is free. Here we touch on the analogical participation of creaturehood in the uncreated.

So created things in their own way exercise a genuine causality. Yet when we look at created causes themselves we observe that sometimes they act with a certain independence within their own secondary field as principal causes, and sometimes they are merely instruments being used by a principal cause. For instance, I am a principal cause of my thinking now, and of my writing on this paper; but the pen in my hand is an instrumental cause of the writing. The writing flows immediately from the pen, but only as guided by my hand and mind and thus heightened to share in a power and movement deriving from hand and mind. All the same the pen contributes its own quota to the total effect, the black lines that are being guided, yet only because it is triggered into action and held in action by my hand, and ultimately by my mind and will. So it is that in every instrument we can distinguish between the natural power of the instrument and the instrumental power geared to a higher effect, a causality that is transiently communicated to it when actually being used by a higher cause. The higher cause elevates the instrument in using it, and simultaneously sets in action both its normal power and communicated power. Acting thus in harmony the joint effect is seen to be one, although we can distinguish the strands of reality in the effect that derive properly from the principal and from the instrumental cause.

Sometimes the part played by the instrument is less obvious. What it properly contributes to the total effect is not quite like the black lines on the paper which are formed into intelligible characters by the hand that holds the pen and the mind that guides the hand. Rather it contributes to the total effect by just being itself and perhaps by acting within its own proper field; but in doing so it modifies the action of the principal cause and gives it a direction which it would not otherwise have had and which perhaps it needed in order to act at all. The water of baptism acts on the body of a person; the power of causing grace which is in the sacrament acts upon the soul of a person.

The priest as sacramental sign

Thus it is in the transsubstantiating action. The human priest utters the words of consecration in the person of Christ. He pronounces them over the bread and the cup that are before him. At that moment he becomes a sacramental sign. He is the sign of the transsubstantiating Christ. But he is the veil, the envelope of the transsubstantiating Christ who is really present to him. Christ who is locally in heaven is in real and spiritual contact with his priest at our altar at some point of this tiny planet. This is a contact that bridges distance in place, and needs no local proximity of Christ to his priest. It is in an exercise of power that uses the priest on earth and his human activity ion the sacramental rite that (by which) the transsubstantiating Christ becomes present at the moment of the changing of the bread and wine; as a result of this he becomes present in another, a more abiding way. He becomes present abidingly under the consecrated species because he was first present fleetingly to the consecrating priest.

Priest as the instrument of Christ

It is the character of priestly order that marks the priest as the instrument of Christ. The priestly character is an instrumental power. But it is a special kind of instrument when it is actually being used by a higher cause. But the human priest enjoys the permanent possession of the power of transubstantiation and he becomes the actual instrument of the transubstantiating Christ whenever he wills. There is an analogy to this in the very humanity of the transubstantiating Christ itself. That very humanity becomes the channel of the power of Trinity using it as its instrument whenever Christ as man freely wills that it should. And now we find the humanity of Christ’s priest on earth becoming the subordinate channel of the power of the Trinity, subject to the humanity of Christ, whenever Christ’s priest on earth freely intends that it should.

When the ordained priest freely co-operates with Christ the priest he becomes the actual instrument of Christ the priest. This is true when he celebrates the sacramental rite that signifies and causes grace in the soul of the initiate as, for example, in Penance. It is also true when he celebrates the mystery that signifies and causes the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood. In exercising his own natural activity, in pronouncing the words of consecration over the Eucharistic elements, or in making any other of the sacramental signs, he channels in a particular direction the action of the principal cause who is Christ. It is this bread, over which he is now uttering these words, that is changed. It is this person with regard to whom he is now celebrating.
indeed, but at the heart of the matter and the key to its sacrifice there was another real presence, less wonderful sixteenth century onwards that theologians forgot to in the host at the time of Berengarius and from the polemics concerning this real presence to be discussed. Indeed, it was perhaps real presence were to make us think that it was the only.

Eating the Lord sacramentally: the closest sign of his love
The real presence in the host does, however, come to the very ultimate in the possibilities of real presence. True, we do not touch the Christ within the host; nor does he touch us, except at the time of sacramental eating. But our very local nearness to the host which is as close to him as accident is close to substance – a nearness which is most intimate at the moment of communion – is the ultimate expression of divine love in our regard. We eat him really, though not naturally (that would be horrible); we eat him really, but sacramentally. There could not be a closer sign of our being made one with him in love.

Implicit metaphysics of the “ordinary man”
This real presence is explained in terms of substance and accident. On the philosophical level St Thomas exploits the riches of Aristotelian metaphysics. But the basic idea of his treatise is an insight of unsophisticated thought. We are using it in ordinary life all the day long. It corresponds, to some extent, to the difference in our powers of knowing, the difference between our intelligence and our senses.

Our senses are confronted by the appearances of a thing; our intelligence touches the thing itself that exists, teaches it as an existential ground of being for all the surface qualities that affect it. Some of these qualities derive from the inner core of its being and reveal to us something of the inner nature of the thing. All our knowledge begins with the shock of sense-experience. Then we penetrate by our intelligence towards the mystery of the thing as an existent and we also gain some intellectual knowledge of its meaning as essence. The distinction then between the heart of a thing and its surface qualities, the noumenon and the sense-phenomena, the substance and its accidents, is really a familiar one and part of the everyday working of the human mind. There are, of course, sophisticated thinkers to deny it; they are those who will deny that there is any fundamental difference between intellect and sense. Catholic theology and, indeed, Catholic dogma is for ever wedded to what is the implicit metaphysics of the ordinary man; the real presence of the body and blood, and of the whole Christ, in the Eucharist is to be intellectually grasped in terms of the distinction between, and the presence to each other of a substance and [the presence of] its accidents.

Local sacramental presence of Christ under the Eucharistic species
In this, however, as in other fields, the theologian’s philosophising about the mysteries of faith has led to developments. In the mystery of the Word incarnate, for instance, the theologian sees what had eluded the mere philosopher; he sees that personality and individuation are not to be identified. Here too, in the Eucharist, he sees that an accident’s containing the substance to which it refers is not to be identified with its inhering in it. The pure philosopher would hardly have thought of this distinction at all. For him the “inhering” would be the “containing”. The theologian who at first saw the quantity of the bread inhering in the bread and thus containing it, now sees that same quantity no longer inhering in any thing at all but actually “containing” the whole Christ just as really as up to the change it had contained the substance of the bread.

this rite who is the recipient of the divine influence that floods the soul with grace. Thus there is, as in the exercise of all instrumental causality, an activity on the part of the instrument (or, at least, a being itself), that renders a service to the principal cause.

Christ as “cause” touches the priest who is his “instrumental cause”
In the sacramental world Christ uses his human priest as his instrument both in the exercise of his power of transubstantiation and in the exercise of his power of sanctifying souls. He comes among the baptised through his priest. But whether he comes as sanctifier or as transubstantiato, he comes always as offerer. There is offering as well as sanctifying. There is offering as well as transubstantiation. And when it is found within the envelope of the double transubstantiation, we have the sacramental sacrifice of the Mass.

So the idea of physical instrumental cause throws a flood of light upon the way the sacraments in general convey grace to the soul and upon the way Christ is said to be the principal offerer in the Mass. Because a higher cause is really present to the lower cause it uses as its instrument, Christ is really present in all the sacramental celebrations, whether they are concerned with the sanctification of man or with the unique and singular consecration of the Eucharistic elements. This real presence is not as intimate and abiding as the real presence of the body and blood of Christ to the accidents that contain them. But it has something which the more abiding presence has not got. It is a presence immediate to us. Christ as cause touches the priest who is his instrumental cause.

When the priest is the instrumental cause of grace, Christ as principal cause touches the soul of the liturgical initiate as a cause touches an effect. When the priest is instrumental cause of transubstantiation, Christ the offerer is put in touch with the soul of the baptised worshipper who with the priest is offering the Mass. In the more abiding presence of Christ under the consecrated elements, we may indeed, even locally, touch the species, but it is the species that touch Christ. This is the mysterious, analogical, touch by which accidents contain the substance to which they refer.

Real presence of Christ in his priest acting upon the elements, and the

real presence of Christ in the consecrated species
This is that real presence of Christ to which the words “real presence” in Eucharistic theology primarily refer. It would be a pity if the historic controversies about this real presence were to make us think that it was the only real presence to be discussed. Indeed, it was perhaps because of the polemics concerning this real presence in the host at the time of Berengarius and from the sixteenth century onwards that theologians forgot to notice that in all the sacraments and in the sacramental sacrifice there was another real presence, less wonderful indeed, but at the heart of the matter and the key to its full intelligence.
This containing would seem to be a relationship – to belong to the Aristotelean category of what are called predicamental relations. But it is not just a relationship; it is emphatically a relationship of containing. It is not just a relationship to the body and blood of Christ who is in heaven, a reaching towards him, a sort of yearning for him. Such a relationship would hardly be the explanation of a real presence. The ultimate explanation of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a relationship between the accidents of bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ. But it is a relationship of containing. Cajetan, the illustrious sixteenth-century commentator of the *Summa*, constantly spoke of it as a relationship to Christ as contained, and Pius XII, in an address to the first international liturgical congress (1956), found it salutary to repeat this teaching. The Eucharistic species are no empty envelope addressed to Christ in heaven. The Christ who is locally in heaven is really contained, although not naturally, but sacramentally, within the sacramental species.

**Christ is sacramentally present in relation to the species that contains his substance**

Another matter in which the demands of his faith have led the theologian further than the philosopher in metaphysics concerns the way in which quantity affects a bodily substance. The philosopher will see substance as in place, and as extended in place. He will see the accident of quantity or extension as putting part of the thing outside part, and all this in reference to the part outside part of the encompassing place. But the theologian believes that the *whole* Christ is contained by what was the quantity of the bread. He knows that this quantity does not inhere in Christ, does not in any way affect him; its sole function is to contain him and, as thus purely and simply contained, to relate him to the place that encompasses the quantity. But the Christ contained within the quantity of the host, really present in this unique and sacramental way, this way in which substance is contained by quantity, has himself his own connatural quantity. Here is a great danger of misunderstanding the situation. Because the extended Christ is underneath the quantity of the bread, we are in danger of thinking of him there as in a place, in the same way the quantified bread and now the quantity of the bread is filling the place that encompasses it. The extended Christ underneath the quantity of the bread is not there as filling a place. He is there just as the substance of the bread was before it and thought of as inhered in by its quantity and extended by it in place. He is really there in a unique manner; he is contained, in the unique way accident contains substance before it exercises inherence in it; that is all. Let us attempt to make this clearer. The Christ thus contained who himself is quantified, extended, and has substantial parts outside parts, does not, as it were, flow into a point. He is related to each part of the quantity of the bread that contains him as the centre of a circle is equally and completely related to any part of the circumference. He is there per modum substantiae contente, yet what quantifies him is his own quantity, which is without direct reference to a place encompassing the quantity of the bread. The quantified Christ is really there, but not as a quantified substance is normally related to an encompassing localising quantity, but purely and simply as a substance is related to a quantity that is purely and simply containing it.

Thus Christ in the Eucharist is quantified, but not in relation to any encompassing, localising quantity. So it is that the theologian realises that quantity does not always extend a thing in place. He sees quantity as exercising two degrees of function. First, it extends a thing in itself; then it extends it in a place. Thus for the second time he is led further than the philosopher. Quantity and the other accidents contain before they affect their subject; quantity extends a thing in itself before it extends it in place. And in both cases the separation of these functions is established in the Eucharist.

**Consecrated species exercise a relationship of containing the whole Christ**

The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, completely transcending any mode of natural presence, is brought about by the changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The idea of changing has, of course, to be used most cautiously. Here we have a unique situation in which the idea of changing is verified in an utterly unique way. Absolutely nothing is done to the body and blood of Christ. Whatever happens makes Christ present not because of something done to him, but because of something done to something else. No real change, even of the slightest kind, is made in the body and blood of Christ. He is made to be really present because of a real relationship between the consecrated appearances of bread and wine and his body and blood. On his side it is a mere relationship in our mind; we see him as related to what is really related to him. The presence is a real presence not because of any added reality or any change in Christ; it is because the consecrated species are now exercising the real relationship to the body and blood, which have succeeded as if they were just substance, to the substance of the bread and wine.

**The relationship of sacramental containing does not do anything to the natural Christ in heaven**

Any idea then of bringing Christ in under the species, of bringing him down to our altars, is foreign to St Thomas’s mind. Christ is there not because he has been brought down, although for theologians of the Scotist school this will seem to be a fair way of describing the situation. Note how in theorising about the sacrifice of the Mass, any idea of really doing anything to Christ is excluded from the Thomist field of view.

If we do not bring Christ in under the species, simultaneously annihilating the substance of the bread, in order, as it were, to “make room” for him, should we then say that we produce him out of the bread? In a sense the word “production” is less unhelpful than the word “adduction” (“bringing him down”). At least it excludes the idea of adduction and makes us realise that it the *bread* that is changed and not Christ who is changed. And it also has not to fall back on the idea of annihilation, which no one really likes ever to attribute to God. For this reason, perhaps, a respectable Thomist like Billuart could allow himself to speak of “production” in this case. But when all is said, it is an unhappy term. To produce the body of Christ out of the bread too strongly suggests a substantial change which leaves as substratum the primal matter of the bread. St Thomas shows that the Eucharistic change is certainly not that. We are left then with the vague word “change”, *conversio*. What it should suggest to us here is the total passing over of the

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Statement of Conclusions
for Meeting of Australian Bishops and the Prefects and Secretaries of
Six Dicasteries of the Roman Curia

In early 2004 the Catholic bishops of Australia will travel to Rome for the ad limina visits. It is likely that the 1998 Statement of Conclusions will provide “agenda points”, and, hopefully, will elevate the momentum to implement these “conclusions”. Some sections are not relevant to diocesan priests, other sections remain highly relevant, such as section IV on the priest and section VI on the sacred liturgy and sacraments. This important document, obtained with the kind assistance of the Secretariat of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Australia, is re-presented for readers edification and collaboration in implementation. (Ed.)

1. Introduction

1. Purpose of the Meeting. Continuing the positive practice already established with other Episcopal Conferences, at the wish of the Holy Father a meeting was organised between some of the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and a significant representation of archbishops and bishops from Australia, in connection with their ad limina visit, and on the occasion of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Oceania. The meeting was conducted in the form of a dialogue aimed at better understanding the situation of the Church in Australia, and at providing an opportunity for a fraternal exchange of views and proposals.

It was recognised at the outset that, while the meeting may have been occasioned by challenges facing the Church in Australia, many of the issues discussed are problems that are found in other parts of the Church throughout the world as well. Furthermore, these deliberations covered only some areas of concern and were not intended to deal with every aspect and dimension of the life of the Church in Australia.

2. The Laity. The role of the laity in the Church in Australia was regularly discussed during this four-day meeting. Their vital commitment to the mission of the Church in the world and their generous collaboration with bishops, priests and religious in serving the needs of their parishes and dioceses was often acknowledged with great gratitude. It is hoped that the reflections in this document on the present situation of the Church in Australia and on the ministry of bishops, priests and religious will be of assistance to the laity themselves. The bishops of Australia hope that any further renewal of the Church which these deliberations bring about will support the laity in living their unique role in the mission of the Church which flows from their consecration in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

3. The Current Situation in the Church in Australia

3. Positive Aspects. The discussion began by recognising the path already travelled by the Church in Australia in response to the word of God and to the reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council ....

4. Weaknesses: A Crisis in Faith. There is a crisis in faith which has as its basis, as the Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio makes clear, a crisis concerning the ability to know the truth. The crisis of faith is world-wide. It is manifested in Australia by the rise in the number of people with no religion and the decline in church practice. The tolerance characteristic of Australian society naturally affects the Church also. While it has many positive elements, tolerance of and openness to all opinions and perspectives on the truth can lead to indifference, to the acceptance of any opinion or activity as long as it does not impact adversely on other people. It can also lead to a reluctance in claiming that any particular affirmation, belief or conviction is true. The loss of confidence in one’s ability to know the truth inevitably involves a crisis of faith in God. All ideas about God, including the denial of his existence, become equally acceptable. This makes it very difficult to affirm that the God revealed in Sacred Scripture is indeed the one true God. There also appears to be a weakening of faith in eternal life, replaced by such things as social utopias and re-incarnation. This crisis of faith and truth provide the context for the following problems.

5. A Crisis in Christology. This crisis of truth is also a crisis in the profession of God as Person – the God of Abraham – and of Jesus as the true God, in such wise that one is able to say “I know God”. It follows naturally then, that Christology is also in something of a crisis. Generally throughout the world, there is evidence of a weakening of faith in Christ, as well as a distortion of some doctrines based on the Scriptures and the early Councils of the Church. These modifications to Christology take two directions: in the first, a re-fashioning of Jesus into a great prophet of humanity, who, for example questions the rules of religion; in the other, substituting a pneumatological economy for the flesh and blood reality of Christ, true God and true man. Indeed, some aspects of feminist scholarship can lead to a rejection of the privileged place given to the scriptural language describing the Trinity and to Jesus’ own teaching, and can even lead to rejection of the Trinity itself. The claims of other religions and non-religious movements can result in a blurring of the divinity or of the unique salvific role of Christ.

6. Challenges to Christian Anthropology. Behind the above-mentioned elements is a profound paradigmatic change in anthropology that is opposed to classical anthropology. It is characterised, for example, by an extreme individualism, seen especially in a concept of conscience that elevates the individual conscience to the level of an absolute, thus raising the subjective criterion above all objective factors and having no point of reference beyond itself. Another example is a change in the relations between creation, nature, body and spirit, resulting in certain forms of feminism which express an anthropology profoundly different from classical anthropology.

7. Moral Problems. From this paradigmatic change in anthropology, there follow great problems for Christian morality: indifference to the poor, racial prejudice and violence, abortion, euthanasia, the legitimation of
homosexual relationships and other immoral forms of sexual activity. For example, in an anthropological perspective which ignores the “specifically human meaning of the body” (Encyclical Letter Veritatis Splendor 50), heterosexuality and homosexuality come to be seen simply as two morally equivalent variations.

8. Problems in Ecclesiology. There are ecclesiological problems that flow from the uncertainties mentioned above concerning God and Jesus Christ. For example, if Christ is nothing more than a great figure in history, who defies the rules, who is anti-ecclesial and who did not create a hierarchy, then it follows that the Church is of merely human origin, and, along with the re-interpretation of Revelation, the Church needs to be re-organised to make it more suited to the present day. Truth is no longer discovered in a Revelation already given, but is based on the shifting sands of majority and consensus.

9. Response to These Challenges. The bishops are confident that, in communion with the college of bishops throughout the world, and with the assistance of the Catholic theological community in Australia, they will be able to respond to these trends. God, in revealing himself, has revealed Truth, and the bishops remain determined to make the face of God visible to the people of today. Formation at all levels must continue and must rely on instruments offered by the Church: above all, the word of God, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church which offer timely indications for dealing with the different challenges mentioned.

III. The Bishop

10. The Role and Responsibilities of the Bishop. The bishop, in his role as chief pastor in his diocese, proclaims the “Good News” of salvation by his life and witness to the saving message of Jesus Christ: a message of truth, hope and joy for the world. Like a good shepherd, the bishop is close to his people, which has always been a mark of the Australian bishop, and in his episcopal ministry he is ever mindful that he is at the service of the People of God.

While every bishop is himself a witness to the truth and is the “visible source and foundation of unity in the particular Church” (Doggmatic Constitution Lumen gentium 23), each bishop is a member of the one episcopate, the single and undivided body of bishops. The unity of the episcopate is therefore one of the constitutive elements of the unity of the Church, and the visible source of the unity of bishops is the Roman Pontiff, head of the episcopal body. It is the authentic communion of the individual bishop with the Successor of Peter which, in a certain sense, guarantees and ensures that the voice of the bishop speaks the word of the Church and so witnesses to the same revealed truth.

The bishop is entrusted with specific responsibilities and duties which are at times difficult and indeed burdensome. In our day we are only too aware of the multitude of influences in our society which work not only against the gospel message of truth, but are even directly hostile to the Catholic Faith. The People of God look to their shepherds for guidance and leadership now more than ever in these confusing and increasingly secularised times. The bishop, as servant of the Gospel, is a beacon of light, leading people to Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life.

The principal means by which bishops carry out this mandate from Christ to build up the unity of His Mystical Body, is through the three-fold office of teaching, sanctifying and governing, which every bishop is called to exercise.

11. To Teach. The bishop teaches clearly and effectively in union with the Holy Father and the Magisterium of the Church: “the teaching of each bishop, taken individually, is exercised in communion with the Roman Pontiff, pastor of the universal Church and with the other bishops dispersed throughout the world or gathered in ecumenical council. Such communion is a condition for its authenticity” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction Donum veritatis 19; cf. Lumen gentium 25). The People of God who are entrusted to their care have a right to receive authentic and clear Catholic teaching from those who represent the Church in its various institutions.

The bishops in Australia are intensely conscious that they are authentic teachers “endowed with the authority of Christ” and that it is their grave responsibility, clearly and unambiguously, to proclaim the Church’s teaching and to do all that they can to preserve the faithful from error. As the “visible source and foundation of unity” in his diocese, the bishop is committed to fostering unity among the faithful and to preventing factions and divisions from developing among the People of God. The bishop may not tolerate error in matters of doctrine and morals or Church discipline, and true unity must never be at the expense of truth. This delicate tension between truth and unity is experienced by most Australian bishops. When such cases of tension arise, the bishops intend to overcome it, trying to identify the truth by all appropriate and available means, especially consulting their brother bishops and the Holy See, and striving to correct errors, not by blunt use of authority, but through dialogue and persuasion.

Making their voice heard by all Catholics (let alone non-Catholics) is a major problem for bishops today. They recognise the importance of a free press and legitimate criticism and, for their part, will endeavour to collaborate more effectively with all responsible forms of the media in order to find new ways for effectively communicating the Gospel in today’s world.

The bishops of Australia, as testes veritatis, are committed to teach the Catholic Faith in Australia. They are assisted in this task by theologians. The Magisterium and theology are both, each in its own way, necessary for the building up of the People of God. In summary yet essential terms, one can say that the theologian has the task of reflecting on Revelation with the instruments of critical reason and of exploring the contents of the Faith with the arguments proper to the intellectual process, but always within the context of the Faith of the Church and in communion with its Pastors. The Magisterium, on the other hand, taking into consideration sound theology, has the task of safeguarding, expounding and teaching the deposit of the Faith in its integrity; that is, of interpreting, with an authority which comes from Christ, the word of God, whether written or transmitted in the living Tradition of the Church.

12. To Sanctify. The bishop is the guardian of the sacraments, the means of sanctification for the faithful, particularly the Holy Eucharist, which is “the source and summit of the
Christian life” (Lumen gentium 11). The bishop is called upon to exercise vigilance over the celebration and administration of the sacraments in his diocese. He ensures the sacraments are administered according to the proper liturgical norms set forth by the Church. If he discovers that these norms are not being followed properly, with integrity and reverence, he acts quickly to correct the error or abuse.

The Australian bishops realise that the sacred Liturgy is at the heart of their pastoral responsibilities. In promoting authentic sacred Liturgy, they have to provide against the introduction of spurious elements on the one hand, while, on the other, encouraging a Liturgy that is living and vibrant according to the prescribed norms and in the spirit of the liturgical reform. Most important is the bishop’s own life of prayer which sustains his whole ministry, especially his central role in the Liturgy of his diocese. He must constantly return to the springs of prayer in order to be strengthened by God in the grace of the Holy Spirit for his own personal sanctification for the good of the Church.

13. To Govern. Minister of Unity and Communion. The bishop, in his pastoral governance, is entrusted with the important task of cultivating deep communion within the particular Church which, in turn, contributes to communion in the universal Church and for each and all members of his diocese: priests, members of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, the lay faithful and other diocesan groups and associations. As the minister of unity in the diocese, the bishop exercises an authority in the service of truth and love. The bishop receives his responsibility and duty to govern as a mandate from Christ himself and therefore keeps watch “over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the Church of God that he acquired with his own blood” (Acts 20: 28).

14. The Bishop in the College of Bishops. The bishop’s duty to teach, sanctify and govern is a personal one, received by virtue of his episcopal consecration and the laying on of hands. This duty is by divine right, and cannot be surrendered to others. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is a forum where a local bishop can seek the assistance of his fellow bishops in pursuing his mission to proclaim the Gospel message (cf. Motu Proprio Apostolos suos 5-7, 14-24). In collaboration with his brother bishops in his own country and throughout the world, and in communion with the Successor of Saint Peter, the local bishop can build up and strengthen the Body of Christ in his own diocese.

15. The Bishop and his Collaborators. In choosing their collaborators in the diocesan administration, in the seminary and in parishes, bishops need to make these appointments with a careful eye and with great attention, always giving emphasis to sanctity of life, orthodoxy and pastoral competence. Continual vigilance is imperative in order to safeguard the integrity of the Faith and to ensure that it is clearly taught and explained at all levels of diocesan life.

The bishop maintains contact with his people at many levels and in many different contexts. It is his special care to demonstrate gratitude and appreciation, and to encourage the faithful in their endeavours as members of the Church, both in their striving for holiness and their charitable service to others. He keeps close contact with the many different diocesan agencies and apostolates under his care.

16. The Bishop and His Special Relationship with His Priests. The bishop nourishes a special relationship with his priests, treating them as friends and collaborators, encouraging them in their work, promoting a sense of fraternity in the presbyterate, organising retreats and promoting opportunities for their on-going education. The bishop himself receives support and encouragement from his priests by their dedication, priestly example and friendship. On the human level, the bishop can foster the positive identity of the priest by being present to him in a caring, personal, direct way, affording him all possible attention and time. As the priest is the closest and most indispensable collaborator of the bishop, he has a primary call on the bishop as his spiritual father, thus no care expended on him can ever be seen to be excessive.

The bishop’s care for priests extends to a special concern for the promotion of all vocations, especially to the priesthood, not only locally, but also nationally. One initiative already taken is the national network of vocation directors in Australia – “Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia” – which provides support, ideas and materials.

As a personal responsibility enjoined upon him for the welfare of his seminarians, the bishop gives his assistance to the rector and staff of the seminary especially in the choice of candidates for ordination. The bishop must have assurance of the candidates’ proper motivation for entrance to the seminary and their preparation (doctrinal, moral, spiritual, human and pastoral) for ordination. The diocesan bishop must have moral certainty of the suitability of the candidate in terms of doctrine, spiritual life and human qualities, before he is ordained to the diaconate. The bishop should never ordain a candidate if there is any serious doubt as to his suitability for Holy Orders.

17. The Mystery of the Cross in the Life of the Bishop. In the world in which we live today, for a bishop to be a true shepherd, he is called to teach doctrinal truth with gentle firmness and profound humility, to sanctify by word and example, and to govern with fidelity and genuine authority. This will necessarily lead to suffering and the Cross. We know well that when the bearers of apostolic office dare to exercise authority which is theirs in matters of doctrine and morals, they become a sign of contradiction to the world. While this is indeed a real challenge for the bishop today, it is at the same time his source of grace, strength and deep joy. The greatest sign of contradiction is also the greatest sign of hope. For in the mystery of the Cross we learn a wisdom which transcends our own weakness and limitations; we learn that in Christ truth and love are one, and in Him we find the meaning of our vocation.

IV. The Priest

18. The Current Context. In viewing the priestly landscape of the Church in Australia, it is difficult not to be struck by the dedication of priests, labouring faithfully under sometimes trying and varied conditions. They are to be lauded and encouraged as they give of themselves so generously for their flocks. The culture of secularism, which is pervasive today, is not of assistance to the priest as he attempts to carry out his sacred duties in a context that can be challenging, even hostile and apathetic at times to his vocational identity and to the ministry he exercises in the name of Christ and of His Church.
which issues from the Church and, in responding, always far exceeds our expectations. In addition to prayer (cf. Mt 9:35–38), and to heeding the invitation of Jesus to “Come and see” (Jn 1:39), a primary responsibility of all consecrated men and women is to propose the ideal of the following of Christ, and then to support the response to the Spirit’s action in the heart of those who are called.

27. Authenticity and Transparency of Life Attract the Young. Consecrated persons need to show forth a life which is recognised for its transparency and authenticity, and this in regard to their spirituality, their ministry and their community living.

All must be able to recognise in them the fact that they are distinguished by an intense spiritual life sustained by prayer, especially by the Eucharist, by fidelity to the evangelical counsels and by ascesis. Consecrated persons are to be “experts in God,” and in His ways. Their whole being ought to be suffused with the divine presence. When people approach religious, they should find men and women whose lives bespeak union with God, and whose lives invite others into that union.

Consecrated persons express the person of Christ – Christ saving and redeeming, Christ forgiving, Christ healing, Christ teaching. Christ in every gesture of compassion toward those in need, Christ loving his people. But there is still more to the apostolate. As the Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata puts it: “More than in any activity, the apostolate consists in the witness of one’s own complete dedication to the Lord’s saving will, a dedication nourished by the practice of prayer and of penance” (n. 44). “The very purpose of consecrated life is conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self giving” (Vita Consecrata 65).

The authenticity and transparency of community life are a striking expression in our time of the fact that living together in grace, with one mind and one heart, is not merely a possibility, but a reality. The whole Church greatly depends on the witness of communities filled ‘with joy and with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 13:52). Such authentic common living, where each one supports and forgives the other, witnesses to the presence of Jesus and speaks directly to the deep yearnings of the heart. For members of Institutes of consecrated life, community life is of the essence of their vocation.

When consecrated persons live their vocation with authenticity and transparency, they are an example of total commitment to the Gospel lived in the spirit of their Founders. This example, joined with constant prayer, is a very effective vocational promotion program. As Pope Paul VI reminded us, people of our age, especially the young, have become sceptical of mere words, and are convinced by words only when these are accompanied by example (cf. Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi 41). The example of consecrated persons evidently rooted in Christ is the best way to convince and inspire young people, inviting them to follow Christ in religious Institutes.

28. Formation. Formation, both initial and ongoing, is aimed at showing in the various moments of life that religious belong totally and joyfully to the Lord. Both formators and those being formed need clarity regarding the charism of the Institute. For this purpose, the establishment of structures to train those responsible for formation would be helpful. The whole person needs to be formed, in every aspect of one’s being, human, cultural, spiritual, and pastoral. Ongoing formation for every member is an intrinsic requirement of consecrated life. Institutes have made great efforts in this area. As a result, religious are often found in solidarity with the most marginal elements of society and in new ministries. In some instances, however, problems have arisen because the selection of formators or of centres for ongoing formation was not made in view of full communion with the Magisterium of the Church.

29. Fragmentation. Because of a changing world and changing expectations, of a desire to be closer to the people or to one’s work, or because of the cost of maintaining large buildings, a number of religious have, with permission of their superiors, opted to leave communities in order to live in apartments or privately. Such an option, however, fragments the life and witness of an Institute. It is not enough that individual members of Institutes engage in employment in the secular sphere and find living accommodations singly. It is not enough that religious engage in any work whatsoever, even if they do this “in the spirit of the Founder.” Such general dispersal of members and of energies prejudices the corporate witness of an Institute which was founded with a specific charism for a specific purpose. Such charisms are given by the Holy Spirit for the good of the entire Church, and religious need to be faithful to them.

30. Associate Members. The fragmentation of Institutes is often accompanied by a practical redefinition of members. Various Institutes now have associate members or collaborators, who share for a period of time the Institute’s community life and its dedication to prayer and the apostolate. This needs to be arranged in such a way, however, that the identity of the Institute in its internal life is not harmed. Though the collaboration of associates allows works conducted by the Institutes to continue, it needs to be recognised that lay associates are not members of the Institute in the way that professed members are. Associate members are not an alternative to the vocations decline.

31. Communion. Vita Consecrata expresses a rich mystery in simple terms: “The Church is essentially a mystery of communion, ‘a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’” (n. 41). This communion is expressed at every level of her life. It is communion that distinguishes her as a body from all other bodies, for communion is not mere regulation, but is an ordering of relationships, in charity, within the Body of Christ. Each member of the Body has a specific importance and role. The Church does not create her own ordering and structuring, but receives them from Christ himself.

32. Experts of Communion. In light of the Council’s strong teaching about communion, “consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practise the spirituality of communion... The sense of ecclesial communion, developing into a spirituality of communion, promotes a way of thinking, speaking and acting which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension” (Vita Consecrata 46). Indeed, “the Church was not established to be an organisation for activity, but rather to give witness as the living Body of Christ” (S. Congr. for Religious and Secular Institutes & S. Congr. for Bishops, Directive Note Mutuae Relationes 20). In the Founders and Foundresses we see a constant and lively sense of the Church, which they manifest by their full participation in all aspects of the Church’s life and in their great cooperation with and ready
19. The Identity of the Priest. It is not to be wondered at that in such an ethos the identity of the priest needs a strong affirmation and almost constant clarification. The priest acts in the person of Christ the Head and the Shepherd (Apostolic Exhortation Pastores dabo vobis 15; Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 875; Interdicasterial Instruction On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests, p. 13, n. 1). To ensure this understanding it is fundamental that correct intellectual, ascetical and doctrinal formation, as well as dutiful and inspired discipline be assured in Seminaries. This should also be continued throughout priestly ministry and life.

20. The Spiritual Life of the Priest. An integral component of true priestly identity is priestly spirituality. It is not a separate element but is at the heart of the identity of the priest. Being a man of God living in the culture of secularism, with all the contemporary pastoral demands and burdens, it is easy for a priest to lose zeal, energy and perspective unless he is firmly rooted in the Spirit of the Living God. Time spent in pursuing the spiritual life is not time taken from pastoral activity but is rather the means of sustaining and enriching pastoral charity in the most meaningful way possible.

Among the principal elements of the priest’s prayer life are the daily Eucharistic celebration, frequent confession and spiritual direction, the Liturgy of the Hours, examination of conscience, mental prayer, lectio divina, retreats, Marian devotions, the Rosary, the Via crucis and other pious exercises, and the fruitful reading of the lives of the saints (cf. Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests 39). Attention to the annual Day of Sanctification for Priests can also be a rewarding and sustaining experience for those whose ministry is so essential to the Church.

Priestly associations which foster fraternal support, promote holiness in the exercise of the ministry and foster the unity of clergy with one another and with their bishop, are to be encouraged. On the other hand, associations which are pressure groups or are not in harmony with the mission of the Church and the liturgical reform and the work of the Second Vatican Council, such an ethos the identity of the priest needs a strong affirmation and almost constant clarification. The priest acts in the person of Christ the Head and the Shepherd (Apostolic Exhortation Pastores dabo vobis 15; Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 875; Interdicasterial Instruction On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests, p. 13, n. 1). To ensure this understanding it is fundamental that correct intellectual, ascetical and doctrinal formation, as well as dutiful and inspired discipline be assured in Seminaries. This should also be continued throughout priestly ministry and life.

21. Continuing Formation. The pastoral demands of the age, as well as the priest’s personal development require that his intellectual formation must not be seen as something pertaining to the seminary period of life only, but must be seen as a continuing, on-going and permanent aspect of his personal response to his vocation. The priest then must personally develop a systematic approach to on-going study as well as participate in the opportunities provided by his bishop, the diocese and the Episcopal Conference for in-service training.

In fact, permanent, on-going formation is essential in constructively dealing with the above-mentioned issues and situations. In this regard, prayerful, systematic study and assimilation of recent documents of the Holy See will provide practical guidance and assistance in the challenging areas of priestly ministry and life. Among those of particular relevance and strongly recommended for attention are: Pastores dabo vobis, Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests, and Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons.

22. Pastoral Charity. The priest is the man in the front lines. His armament is spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Despite the many attempts to remove the figure of the priest from the centre of the lives of believers, the faithful treasure their relationships with their spiritual fathers, despite the “earthen vessels” priests are.

Because of his closeness to his people and their lives, and as he is constantly being bombarded by the easy pragmatic solutions to difficult pastoral problems proffered by the culture of secularism, it is not always easy for the priest to call his people to embrace the prophetic stance of the children of light, yet this is what he must do without fail. No pastoral solution can be so called that is not flowing from God’s Revelation as this is interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church. Thus a practice in pastoral life which is contrary to the teachings of Christ and His Church, is not an act of compassion, but rather is one that radically disorders pastoral charity and has long term negative consequences for the faithful and for the unity and identity of the priesthood and the Faith. Thus, the priest acts truly in persona Christi when he brings the fullness of the truth of the High Priest to the People of God whom he serves. It is only that pastoral truth which can really set them free.

23. Collaboration of the Lay Faithful. Despite the goodwill involved, in a sometimes functional approach to priesthood, the identity of the priest has been further clouded when tasks have been entrusted to laity that belong to the ministerial priesthood. There has, at times, been a concomitant excessive involvement of the priest in areas that should be attended to by a committed and well-formed laity. This situation has had the effect of blurring the lines between the baptismal priesthood and the ministerial priesthood with negative effects on both.

Clarity in this area is essential for many reasons, not least of which are the preservation of the authentic identity of both priest and laity, good order within the Church and the promotion of vocations.

24. Responsibility for Catechesis. As the preaching of the word of God and catechesis is such an important part of priestly ministry, and so necessary for the salvation of souls, priests must be aware of their responsibility in these areas. The matter of catechesis cannot be left solely in the hands of others, no matter how skilled they be. The transmission of the Faith is to be actively attended to by priests as this is an essential part of their ministry.

Priests will find the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Directory for Catechesis invaluable aids in carrying out their responsibilities in this area as well as a source of enrichment for their personal lives.

V. Consecrated Persons

25. Consecrated Life in Australia. Consecrated life, as evidenced by its universal presence and evangelical witness, is not isolated and marginal but a reality which affects the whole Church. Because consecrated life manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling and has contributed significantly to the vitality of the Church in Australia, she is committed to supporting it. Elsewhere in this document, the great contributions of religious, oftentimes as pioneering innovators and at great personal and community sacrifice, have been recognised.

26. Vocations Decline. The Church in Australia is undergoing a difficult period due to the decline of vocations to the consecrated life. In light of this challenge, the Church must pray for vocations. The Lord always heeds the prayer.
obedience to the bishops, especially to the Roman Pontiff.

33. Consecrated Life in the Particular Church. Consecrated persons must be in communion with their Pastors, and this at the level of both the particular Church and the universal Church. Consecrated persons are called to be mindful of the ancient dictum: sentire cum Ecclesia, to live and think and love with the Church. In this regard, Vita Consecrata is very explicit. “A distinctive aspect of ecclesial communion is allegiance of mind and heart to the Magisterium of the bishops, an allegiance which must be lived honestly and clearly testified to before the People of God by all consecrated persons, especially those involved in theological research, teaching, publishing, catechesis and the use of the means of social communication. Because consecrated persons have a special place in the Church, their attitude in this regard is of immense importance for the whole People of God” (Vita Consecrata 46).

The special place of consecrated persons in the Body is recognised by the Church when she erects the Institutes, confirms their Constitutions, entrusts an apostolate to the community and recognises the profession of each member. Because the one Faith underlies the Church’s life, all members must be in union with the teaching of the Church. In matters of the Faith, communion rules out such concepts as “loyal opposition,” or “faithful subversion.” The faithful strive to deepen their understanding of the Faith, not to oppose it or to subvert it. Institutions, especially in the field of education, which are under the authority of consecrated persons should assure that lecturers, both those who are on staff and those who are invited, serve, in union with the Church, to deepen the understanding of Faith.

34. The Role of the Bishop. Institutes, at the time of their founding, are notably in communion with the local bishop. When an Institute acquires the status of diocesan right, the bishop of the generale house has particular responsibilities which are specified in common law; for Institutes of pontifical right, the Holy See has specific responsibilities (cf. can. 589-96). All Institutes, however, are to integrate their pastoral activity within the overall pastoral plan of the diocese in which they are present and are to minister in communion with the bishop. He is responsible for discerning and respecting, promoting and coordinating all charisms in the diocese, including the charisms of the Institutes of both pontifical and diocesan right. He needs to be willing to intervene when problems arise, and, according to circumstances, he may also seek the collaboration of other bishops involved, or of the Episcopal Conference, or of the appropriate Dicastery of the Holy See. Conferences of major superiors (cf. can. 708-709) are formed to help each Institute achieve its purpose and to coordinate and cooperate with the Conference of Bishops and with individual bishops. These Conferences are not organs of parallel pastoral authority.

35. Public Status of Religious. While relations between the bishops and the major superiors have been, generally, good, with most problems resolved by dialogue and understanding, still several difficulties have emerged with importance for the Church.

Religious, by reason of their public state in the Church, are prominent in the eyes of the faithful and of the secular media. This prominence requires a more evident fidelity to the Magisterium than is required of ordinary faithful. What is true of all religious is even more true of major superiors, by reason of their office. What is true of major superiors is still more true of a conference of major superiors erected by the Holy See.

36. Some Concerns. The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life has shared with the bishops several concerns about situations in Australia, and asks them to dialogue with the major superiors regarding such points as promoting prayer for ecclesial vocations, including those of consecrated life, and deepening both communion within the Church and assent to the Magisterium regarding such areas as the non-ordination of women to the priesthood, the theology of the Church and of the sacraments of faith, the theology of communion and moral problems.

VI. The Sacred Liturgy and the Sacraments

37. Gains and Future Prospects. The work of renewal of the Church in Australia has made progress largely by means of the renewal of the Liturgy and the people’s fuller participation in liturgical celebration.

In Australia, as elsewhere, experience bears out the Holy Father’s observation that the vast majority of “the pastors and the Christian people have accepted the liturgical reform in spirit of obedience and indeed joyful fervour. For this we should give thanks to God for that passage of the Holy Spirit through the Church which the liturgical renewal has been” (Apostolic Letter Vigilænsis Quintus Annus 12).

It is a pressing need that these positive results be built upon. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has already planned to set aside significant resources to produce educational materials on the Mass which can be used at a diocesan or parish level. Other concrete initiatives will also be devised to ensure the quality and authentic fidelity of liturgical celebration and sacramental practice as the third Christian millennium dawns.

38. The True Meaning of the Sacred Liturgy. It is important that the sacred Liturgy as a whole be appreciated in all its profundity and mystery. The Liturgy is more than a recollection of past events, a means of imparting knowledge or a vehicle for expressing the faith and life of the celebrating community. It is fundamentally the manifestation of God’s initiative and his loving will to save, expressed in the Paschal Mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ, made present and efficacious by the Holy Spirit. In the Liturgy, Christ’s work is carried forward by the Church until the end of time.

The Council spoke therefore of the Liturgy as the summit or high-point toward which the activity of the Church tends and the fountainhead from which all her strength flows (cf. Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium 10; cf. Apostolic Letter Dies Domini 32). By their participation in the earthly Liturgy all the faithful are formed in right conduct and prepared for that Liturgy in the heavenly city to which we journey as pilgrims (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium 8; Dies Domini 37).

39. The Liturgy: Act of Christ and of His Church. The celebration of the Liturgy is therefore never a private action of the celebrant or of the community gathered in a particular place, but an act of the Church as such (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium 26), in intimate union with Christ her Head. Accordingly, an insistence on “good liturgy” is right and useful as long as the expression is not misunderstood as meaning a
human virtuoso, external performance or “choreography”. Rather, all participants should accommodate and subordinate themselves and their manner of thinking, acting and speaking to the great gift and mystery of God’s Redemption, and to the person of Christ, our sole Saviour, with a special reverence for the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist at the Mass and reserved in the tabernacle.

40. The Liturgy: Manifestation of the Nature of the Church. Since it lies at the center of the Church’s life, the Liturgy manifests the Church’s very nature and directs it consciously and explicitly toward its ultimate goal. The Church is seen most perfectly in the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by the bishop of the diocese, surrounded by his priests, deacons and the community of the faithful (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium 26, 41; Dies Domini 34).

This ideal phenomenon is realised in varying degrees in circumstances where the bishop is not able to be present and where he is represented ordinarily by a priest. Even in such circumstances, the bishop remains the essential point of reference and the celebration necessarily reflects the nature of the Church as a “structured communion” whose nature is reflected in an “ordered exercise of liturgical action” (On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests, n. 6 §§ 1–2; cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 26; Lumen gentium, nn. 10–11).

It is when each takes part in the Liturgy according to his or her specific role in the Body of Christ that the whole Body is built up most effectively.

41. Authentic Promotion of the Liturgy. In today’s rapidly changing world it is all the more necessary to return constantly to the authentic teaching of the Church on the Liturgy, as found in the liturgical texts themselves and, among many other authoritative sources, as reaffirmed and explained in a lucid and accessible manner in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Many people today call for a more “transcendental” Liturgy, and indeed liturgical celebrations must be permeated with a proper religious sense born of faith in unseen realities (cf. Dies Domini 43). Care must be given to the beauty and elegance of the vestments, sacred vessels, surroundings, furnishings, and to the eloquence of the words and actions themselves, to factors which will encourage the participation of the faithful, and to catechesis concerning the meaning of the liturgical signs (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium 11, 14; S. Congr. for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Inaestimabile Domum 16–17; Dies Domini 35).

At the same time the Liturgy must be a living event, accessible to the people. There is a need in catechesis, in all pastoral care and in liturgical celebration itself to involve all Catholics, above all the young, more fully in the Liturgy and help them to understand and live out its meaning. The Church in Australia, as in other countries, faces a notable decline in recent years in the numbers of Catholics attending Sunday Mass, a situation which calls for a pastoral response (cf. Dies Domini 36, 46–49).

42. Weaknesses and Correctives. A weakness in parish liturgical celebrations in Australia is the tendency on the part of some priests and parishes to make their own changes to liturgical texts and structures, whether by omissions, by additions or by substitutions, occasionally even in central texts such as the Eucharistic Prayer. Practices foreign to the tradition of the Roman Rite are not to be introduced on the private initiative of priests, who are ministers and servants, rather than masters of the sacred Rites (Sacrosanctum Concilium 22 § 3; Instruction Inaestimabile Domum 5). Any unauthorised changes, while perhaps well-intentioned, are nevertheless seriously misguided. The bishops of Australia, then, will continue to put their energy above all into education, while correcting these abuses individually. Such education and corrective action are also the effective means for the pastoral care of those at the parish level who criticise and report the efforts of others, sometimes justly, but sometimes in a judgmental, selective, ill-informed and unproductive manner.

A return to a real sense of the Church and of Liturgy is the most effective path to overcoming obstinacy in personal tastes and to setting aside arbitrary action, fault-finding, conflict and division. Both in regard to the Liturgy and other questions in the life of the Church, there is a need for fidelity to the mind of the Church and willingness to dialogue with others, above all the pastors and bishops.

43. Liturgical Translations. For authenticity in the Liturgy, it is essential that the translation of the texts not be so much a work of “creativity” as of a faithful and exact vernacular rendering of the original text, which itself is the fruit of the liturgical renewal and draws upon centuries of cultural and ecclesial experience.

While fully respecting the genius of each language and avoiding a rigid literalism, an appropriate translation also carefully avoids paraphrase, gloss or interpretation. The explanation of the riches contained within the liturgical texts is the concern not of liturgical translation, but of the homily and of sustained catechesis.

The substantial unity of the Roman Rite is an expression of the theological realities of communion and of ecclesial unity and contributes to the rich plurality of the Church. Within their respective historical and cultural contexts, of course, the same may be said for the other Catholic liturgical families of venerable antiquity. To this end, the practice of the recognitio of the Holy See as desired by the Second Vatican Council (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium 36; S. Congr. of Rites, Instruction Inter Oecumenici, 20–31; canon 838) stands as a guarantee of the authenticity of the translations and their fidelity to the original texts. By means of this practice, a concrete sign of the bond of communion between the successor of Peter and the successors of the other Apostles, translations become truly the expression in the local Churches of the heritage of the universal Church. The Holy See may not divest itself of this responsibility, and the bishops, who bear the responsibility of overseeing and approving the translations, likewise regard their own role as a direct and solemn trust. In this delicate work, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference will continue to cooperate in English-language questions in so far as possible with other English-speaking Episcopal Conferences.

44. The Sense of Sin. Many bishops in Australia and elsewhere have noted a decline in the sense of sin, stemming from the deeper reality of a crisis of faith, and having grave repercussions for the sacrament of Penance. The situation calls for a renewed and energetic catechesis on the very nature of sin as opposed to salvation, and thus for a focus
in sacramental praxis not only on the consolation and encouragement of the faithful, but also on instilling a true sense of contrition, of authentic sorrow for their own sins. Catholics should come to understand more deeply Jesus’ death as a redeeming sacrifice and an act of perfect worship of the Father effecting the remission of sins. A failure to appreciate this supreme grace would undermine the whole of Christian life. They should be made fully aware, too, of the indispensable role in the reconciliation of sinners which Christ has entrusted to His Church.

45. The Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. Individual confession and absolution remains the “sole ordinary means by which one of the faithful who is conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and with the Church” (canon 960; cf. Rituale Romanum, Ordo Paenitentiae, n. 31; canon 960; Catechism of the Catholic Church 1484). Energetic efforts are to be made to avoid any risk that this traditional practice of the sacrament of Penance fall into disuse.

The communal celebration of Penance with individual confessions and absolution should be encouraged especially in Advent and Lent, but it cannot be allowed to prevent regular, ready access to the traditional form for all who desire it. Unfortunately, communal celebrations have not infrequently occasioned an illegitimate use of general absolution. This illegitimate use, like other abuses in the administration of the sacrament of Penance, is to be eliminated.

The teaching of the Church is reflected in precise terms in the requirements of the Code of Canon Law (cf. esp. canons 959-964). In particular it is clear that “A sufficient necessity is not ... considered to exist when confessors cannot be available merely because of a great gathering of penitents, such as can occur on some major feastday or pilgrimage” (canon 961 § 1).

The bishops will exercise renewed vigilance on these matters for the future, aware that departures from the authentic tradition do great wrong to the Church and to individual Catholics.

46. Appropriate Liturgical Formation. So that the faithful may be sure to receive from their priests an authentic and informed ministry and teaching, insistence will continue to be placed upon the stipulation of the Council’s Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium (n. 16), that the sacred Liturgy be regarded as one of the principal subjects in major seminaries, a requirement that is the subject of further guidelines offered by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education’s Instruction, In ecclesiasticam (3 June 1979).

Such liturgical formation needs to be followed through in all the different sections of the Catholic community and at the various levels in a consistent and permanent fashion. Only in this way will communities and individuals be brought to a deeper understanding of the Liturgy. Likewise, only by sustained programs of this kind can the Church in Australia be assured of a sufficient pool of resource persons to sustain the different areas of liturgical development.

VII. Education and Evangelization

47. Evangelization. While it is clear that education is not the only means of evangelization, it has been, and continues to be, in the Australian context, a very important one. Among other means, a competent use of the mass media figures as well in this area. We are mindful too of the words of Pope Paul VI: “Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit” (Evangelii nuntiandi 75).

48. Preparation for Priesthood: Idea of the Priesthood. Preparation for the priesthood takes place in the seminary which is “an educational community, indeed a particular educating community” (Pastores dabo vobis 61). It is essential for the seminary to achieve its task, that the education imparted there be characterised by a clear and authentic idea of the ministerial priesthood, its specificity and its relationship to the priesthood of all the baptised (cf. Lumen gentium 10). This idea, in turn, should be based on a sound Christology and ecclesiology, as transmitted by the Church. These ideas should be clear in the minds of both the teachers and the students.

49. Co-workers of the Bishop. Candidates for the priesthood should be instilled with the idea that they will be the appreciated co-workers of their bishops and the bearers of the joy of the Gospel to the People of God. They are to be the bishops’ collaborators in the work of evangelizing, sharing also, in virtue of their ordination and mission, in the three-fold task of teaching, sanctifying and shepherding.

50. Priesthood and Celibacy. Seminarists should be helped spiritually, and in other appropriate ways, to nourish a conviction of the relationship of celibacy to their priestly vocation, and its fruitfulness in the priestly ministry, and to commit themselves to its observance.

51. Formation. The Apostolic Exhortation Pastores dabo vobis proposes the essential aspects for a well-integrated formation of candidates for the priesthood in the context of today’s world. These are: human formation as its basis; spiritual formation as the heart, to achieve union with God in Christ; intellectual formation containing a strong philosophical component, as an instrument for the understanding of the Faith; and pastoral formation, as its goal, to bring about in the priest a sharing in Christ’s own pastoral charity.

Priestly formation requires not only formation of the candidates for the priesthood but also that of the educators in the seminary. The choice and preparation of the priests who will be rectors, spiritual directors and other members of the seminary’s formation team require a special attention.

52. The Scrutinies. For the good of individuals and of the whole Church, careful attention is to be given to the considerations set out by the recent circular of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments regarding the Scrutinies to be held before each of the major steps in the advancement of candidates to Holy Orders. A candidate for the diaconate or the priesthood must be totally free before God and the Church to assume the responsibility of ordained ministry. For his part the diocesan Bishop must have a moral certainty of the suitability and worthiness of the candidate in terms of doctrine, spiritual life and human qualities, before the man is ordained to the diaconate.

53. Vocations. Pastoral work, especially among the young, should have a vocation-promoting dimension to it. The “soil” for welcoming the seed of vocations should also be cultivated among parents and within the family generally. The supernatural means of vocational promotion should underlie all such efforts, and the ecclesial sense of vocation should be clear. The idea of a continental congress for Australia on vocations, such as has been held for Latin America and for Europe merits consideration.
54. The Apostolic Visitation. The Apostolic Visitation of the seminaries of Australia, interrupted in 1997, should resume as soon as is feasible.

55. Tertiary education: The Ecclesiastical Faculty. The curricula leading to ecclesiastical degrees at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, which was erected by the Holy See, should be utilised to the fullest extent possible. This is important because such a faculty, with its particular structure, has “the aim of profoundly studying and systematically explaining, according to the scientific method proper to it, Catholic doctrine, derived with the greatest care from divine revelation. It has the further aim of carefully seeking the solution to human problems in the light of that same revelation” (Apostolic Constitution Sapientia christiana 66). Both the Chancellor and the Holy See have the right and the duty to safeguard the Catholic character of an ecclesiastical faculty.

56. Catholic Universities. The recent establishment of two Catholic universities in Australia merits recognition, and they are deserving of the support of the whole Catholic population, particularly of those parts which are in the geographical areas where the Universities are located. The university itself and the bishops should be attentive to safeguarding the university’s Catholic identity. The Catholic university “makes an important contribution to the Church’s work of evangelization. It is a living institutional witness to Christ and His message, in cultures marked by secularism” (Apostolic Constitution Ex corde Ecclesiae 49). The Catholic university performs this service in accordance with its nature as a university.

57. University Pastoral Ministry. Of significant importance as well is the pastoral care offered to Catholic students, professors and staff in civil universities. Men and women should be carefully selected and suitably prepared for this work, which aims at a Catholic formation of persons in the university world that is congruent with their secular academic preparation.

58. Church Authority and Theological Formation. The local ecclesiastical authority, who may seek the assistance of the Holy See in the matter, should follow with understanding and with active concern the question of the doctrinal soundness of the theological formation given either in departments of theology in Catholic universities or in other theological centres, called “theological faculties” in Australia.

59. Formational Purpose. While differing in some aspects of their functions and aims, all of these institutions and activities connected with tertiary education have precise formational intentions. They aim at an integral formation of persons, not just their preparation for a professional task. They aim as well at preparing leaders for the Church and for society at large who will be both competent in their respective fields and faithful in Catholic belief and behaviour. The fidelity to the Church’s Magisterium in these institutions and in the publications by their professors will be an important gauge of the Catholic life of the nation today and an influence on it in the future.

60. Education in Catholic schools: Contribution of the Catholic Schools. Catholic schools have made a tremendous contribution to the Church in Australia throughout its history, and continue to do so today. The Catholic school system is active and flourishing, well organised and generally of high quality, providing one of the foremost means of evangelization and of instructing young people in the Faith. Evangelization programs must take account of the increasing secularisation of students, who no longer receive the basic faith formation at home as in the past and of the increasing number of non-Catholic students. Care is needed to ensure that a desire to be welcoming to all does not compromise the Catholic identity of the school.

61. Formation of Lay Teachers. The rapid loss of religious men and women teaching in the schools has had an impact on the atmosphere and Catholic identity of the school. The lay teachers who have taken their places must be properly formed in the Faith, especially principals and those who teach religion. Much has already been achieved in this regard. Because Catholic school education involves interior education and formation in the Faith, a significant proportion of the staff should be practising Catholics, who look upon themselves as educators in the Faith as well as teachers of their specific subjects. All staff, both Catholic and non-Catholic, should support the religious formation of the students and the educational goals of the school.

62. The Place of the Catholic School in the Local Church. The Catholic school does not exist in isolation, but is part of the wider faith community of the parish and the diocese. Students, teachers and parents should all be conscious of the school as a part of the ecclesial community, first in the parish, then in the diocese and the universal Church. For many children, the school rather than the parish represents their Church and is their only contact with the Church. Catholic education should lead to full participation and involvement in the Church – the Church which, at the local level, is centred in the parish. There need to be strong partnerships built between parish and educational programs; the parish should support the school as one of its most important apostolic works and the school should assist the parish in forming young people in their faith.

63. Atmosphere. In a Catholic school, the educational climate should be permeated throughout by a Christian way of thought and life. Students should know as soon as they set foot in a Catholic school that they are in a different environment, one illuminated by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics. Particular attention should be given in the school to prayer and the celebration of the sacraments.

VIII. Conclusion

The aim of the meeting between various Dicasteries of the Holy See and bishops representing the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference was to arrive at a deeper understanding of the situation of the Church in Australia in the area of doctrine and morals, the liturgy, the role of the bishop, evangelization and mission, the priesthood and religious life, and Catholic education. The vitality of the Church in this great continent was brought into full relief during the meeting, as were some of the challenges facing the Australian bishops, but most evident was the common desire to work together to overcome the problems.

The meeting was therefore a great “moment” of authentic affectus collegialis between the Church in Australia and the

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