

Tillich says in speaking of the churches, "They feel—or should feel—that they are fighting agents of the Kingdom of God, leading forces in the drive toward the fulfilment of history."¹⁵

It is both my hope and my prediction that the movement toward the reunion of the churches will leap forward only when all Christian communities take seriously their eschatological mission to the world, when they think of themselves not merely in terms of their past, and not merely in terms of dialogue with contemporary culture, but think back to their past and their present in light of that absolute future which God has promised and for which the church is called to prepare the world. For this mission the church will need structures, as she has in the past. The most important question to ask, however, is not whether these structures will be true to the past—that is our traditional ecumenical style—but whether they will open faith up to the future. For in the day of God's judgment, the church will not be asked how successful she was in sticking to the past, but how well she prepared mankind to be ready for the future of history in the kingdom of God. A new hermeneutic that is forged in the light of that future will level those differences in the present situation which prevent the unity of the church. It will be a hermeneutic that opens the eyes of the church to read the signs of the time on her missionary pilgrimage toward the end of history. The structural problem of the church today will be resolved only through a transformation of perspective which argues for particular structures not as extensions of the past but as servants of the present and anticipations of the future. Our interconfessional conversations at the present time are to a great extent sterile because of an uncritically assumed methodology which debates the living issues of the present on the basis of dead ideologies of the past. Theologians feel that they have to become re-Aristotelianized in order to enter an ecumenical dialogue. While the past will command its due, a more adequate methodology will take account of the future orientation of the churches. That is, we should not merely be asking about our agreements and disagreements in the past, about which we cannot do very much. Rather, we should be asking about our common aims and goals, about present means and future ends, and seek a disclosure of our unity on our way to a common future destiny.

¹⁵ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), Vol. III, p. 376.

THE FUNCTION OF THE MINISTER IN THE EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION: AN ECUMENICAL APPROACH

by

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The question of the minister in relation to the Eucharistic service refers first of all to the minister in the strict sense, who has been "set apart" precisely, though not necessarily only, in order to prepare himself for liturgical functions. This is not to rule out liturgical functions on the part of others. On the contrary, the chief minister is commonly assisted by others who act also as ministers, although of another rank: theoretically, deacons and members of the minor Orders; practically, laymen with special functions, like organists, singers, ushers, etc. Furthermore, this multiplicity of special ministries within the framework of a Eucharistic service does not do away with the general function of the congregation as a whole, which provides at least the framework within which the Eucharistic service takes place.

In order to focus the topic, I will begin with some considerations on the function of the Congregation.

I

Traditionally there is no Eucharistic celebration without the participation of the laity. This is clear in the II Vatican Council's Constitution on the Liturgy:

26. Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the "sacrament of unity," namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops.

Therefore liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it; but they concern the individual members of the Church in different ways, according to their differing rank, office, and actual participation.

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27. It is to be stressed that whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, so far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private.

Even though entirely private celebrations exist in Roman Catholicism, this is only, according to the liturgical rules, by way of exception. The rubrics require at least the symbolic presence of a congregation in the person of a server. Numerous exceptions to this are actually made, either with or without the canonical authorizations. Yet we may say without hesitancy that they are always, in themselves, abuses, even when particularly difficult circumstances may excuse such practices. As the Liturgical Constitution also says: "The Mass keeps always its public and social nature" (n.27). On this basis, a priest saying Mass without a congregation may claim that the public nature of the liturgy is maintained *in esse*; by the same token, it is obvious that the *bene esse* of the Eucharistic celebration requires actual participation by a congregation.

On this point there is a perfect continuity from the early Church to the contemporary liturgical reforms. Ignatius of Antioch described the Church as so united to the Bishop, the priests and the deacons that it constitutes "a symphony in unity."¹ In the sixteenth century, the fundamental intention of the Reformers regarding the Mass was to stress its community aspect, as may be gathered from the *Apology for the Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXV:

Quod vero tantum fit apud nos publica missa seu communis, nihil fit contra catholicam Ecclesiam. Nam in graeciis parochiis ne hodie quidem fiunt privatae missae sed fit una publica missa, idque tantum dominicis diebus et festis. In monasteriis fit quotidie missa sed tantum publica. Haec sunt vestigia morum veterum. Nusquam enim veteres scriptores ante Gregorium mentionem faciunt privatarum missarum.

And in the Anglican context, we know John Jewel's famous challenge in his sermon at St. Paul's Cross, November 26, 1559:

If any learned man of all our adversaries, or if all the learned men that be alive, be able to bring any one sufficient sentence out of any old Catholic doctor or father or out of any old General Council, or out of the holy Scriptures of God, or any one example of the primitive Church, whereby it may be clearly

¹ Ignatius, *Ad Eph.*, V, 1.

and plainly proved that there was any private Mass in the whole world at that time for the space of six hundred years after Christ . . . I would give over and subscribe unto him.²

Whatever the reasons for the challenge in the sixteenth century, we must recognize here a common liturgical tradition.

The ability of the congregation to participate in the Eucharist is rooted in the sacrament of baptism and in its completion, confirmation. The man who has been initiated to the death and resurrection of Christ by being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, has by the same token been oriented toward a fuller participation in the life of the resurrected and ascended Lord. The Eucharist is the appropriate medium of this participation, since it implies both the descent of the Lord in his resurrected flesh among his People to make them one body with himself, and the People's ascent to the heavenly life with the transformation of the gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord. Especially in the Gospel according to St. John, the Eucharist appears as the necessary sequel of the baptismal experience or, in the words of Vatican II, as

the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper (n.10).

Participation in the Eucharist needs no further completion. There is no further initiation into the Christian life once man has entered into communion with the presence of the Risen Lord; there can only be a deepening of this communion, a growth in the spiritual insight that comes from it and more profound transformation of oneself through the Eucharistic experience.

Insistence on baptism as the key to Eucharistic participation does not imply that each Christian as a separate individual becomes a "lay minister" of the Eucharist. The "common priesthood" of all believers is common in the sense of belonging to the entire People of God, not in that of being shared separately by all the units that constitute the People. When the 1st Epistle of Peter speaks of the "royal priesthood," it does not refer to a collection of individuals who would

² John Jewel, *Works* (Parker Society), vol. I, pp. 20-21.

constitute as many distinct subjects of this priesthood: it has in the mind the People, the collectivity, the congregation, and only secondarily the men and women who form the People. It is only as incorporated into a Temple that they all become "living stones." From this point of view, the concept of "universal priesthood of believers" has been biased in many currents of Protestantism by an overstress on the individual believer and his unique responsibility before God. It is as members of a priestly people that baptized Christians are priests. Baptism introduces them into the People and thereby gives them priestly quality and function, namely, the capacity to participate in the mystery of Christ, interceding in heaven.³

The priestly function of the congregation in the Eucharistic celebration is not restricted to offering "a sacrifice of praise" of its own, "spiritual sacrifices" that could be added to the sacrifice of Christ, being qualitatively and, so to say, ontologically distinct from it. Rather, the priestly congregation acts in its priestly capacity in that it offers the very sacrifice of Christ, acting as a medium through which the Spirit, "spread out in the hearts," expresses his "unutterable groaning." Thus the congregation memorializes and shares in the redeeming sufferings of the Lord and the joyful exultation of his glorification.⁴

This leads us directly to the function of the minister, who, in the Eucharistic celebration, acts in a twofold capacity. He is, through baptism, a member of the priestly People, and acts, at that level, in the same capacity as the congregation. But he also has been given another function, mediated and symbolized by Ordination. These two aspects will now be seen.

II. THE MINISTER AS MEMBER OF THE PEOPLE

We shall start with what is not specific to the functional ministry but rather underlies everything the priest does in the Eucharistic celebration. As one of the People of God, presenting himself before God together with the People for adoration, prayer, thanksgiving,

³ See the pastoral letters of Cardinal Suhard, *The Parish Community and Priests among Men* (in *The Church Today*, Chicago, 1953); Bishop Emile De Smedt, *The Priesthood of the Faithful* (New York, 1962); Otto Karrer, *The Kingdom of God Today* (New York, 1964).

⁴ This is usually well stressed in Anglican liturgical writing, e.g. David Paton, ed., *The Parish Communion Today* (London, 1962); J. A. T. Robinson, *Liturgy Coming to Life* (London, 1960); Nathan Wright, *One Bread, One Body* (Greenwich, Conn., 1962).

petition, contemplation, reading, hearing and following the Word, entering into the life and mind of Christ, communing with him through his sacramental presence in the reception of his Body and Blood and through the community which is his Body, the priest does nothing that is not done by the whole congregation then gathered together for this purpose. This elementary point may easily be forgotten, as happens when the minister performs, as it were, by himself, leaving the congregation to its own devices in its attempts at prayer. The rooting of the People's prayer in the sacrament of baptism entails the minister's duty to formulate the prayers of the congregation. I am not speaking here of a mediatory function in the proper sense of the term (the minister being such a mediator as no other could be), but of a representative one. The minister represents the congregation in a twofold sense.

In the first place, he helps the congregation to be attentive to the Eucharistic mystery. By his position, attitude, gestures, intonations, vestments, he helps to focus attention on the purpose of the gathering. As such a spiritual leader he is not yet involved in the special function deriving from the sacrament of Orders; for he only helps to create a religious atmosphere and elicit the sense of the sacred in the People, including himself. Yet this is not reserved to the chief minister. For the other ministers associated to him in the celebration of the Eucharist function in the same way: acolytes, servers, organ players, "ministers of music," singers, etc., assist the People in their prayer. And, at a broader level, any and all members of the Congregation contribute to the same purpose by their attitudes of reverence, their desire to pray, their attentiveness.

In the second place, the minister represents the congregation (and here again, all degrees of ministry do the same thing) insofar as the People trust him to fulfil his function properly and therefore entrust him with representative quality as a leader of its prayer. That such a delegation by the People is implicit in all liturgical functions appears clearly enough whenever some laymen decide that they prefer the services of a certain parish rather than those of another, the liturgical behavior and the "way of saying Mass" of one priest, and when they travel sometimes long distances to find a minister "whom they like." When this happens, no one questions the Orders of any celebrant; it is the impression made and the inspiration drawn from his human appearance as the president of the liturgical assembly which is in question. Some feel that the celebrant truly represents them and their

religious ideas and ideals, while others are spiritually and intellectually frustrated by his ways as a leader of prayer.

I am not discussing here the advisability of this sort of discrimination, which, if it were very widespread, could become a general nuisance. Rather, I am interested in the theological background which makes it possible: the celebrant does not function only by virtue of the sacrament of Orders received from on high, but also by virtue of the trust placed in him by the People, by the extent to which he acts as one of the People, able to "have compassion for our weaknesses" (Hebr. 4:15). The sacrament of baptism is an introduction into a Body, an organism, a community or communion, and gives all members the responsibility of behaving in such a way that they can be recognized as valid interpreters of the religious attitudes of the community: they share the same *agape*. If the Church is indeed itself *agape*, as Ignatius of Antioch liked to call her,⁵ all the faithful, and especially those who have special functions in the liturgy, should act for the whole body, thus expressing in their gestures, words and actions, the "collegiality" of the People of God.⁶ Admittedly, it is delicate, and perhaps dangerous, to judge this insertion into the cohesiveness of the People of God by "impressions" or "feelings" at the level of the esthetic sense. Yet this cannot be entirely ruled out as a gauge of who is and who is not a proper representative of the People, and of what is and what is not a proper liturgical practice. Insofar as the president of the liturgical assembly and his assistants have to perform an action in front of, and in the name of, a given Congregation, the desire to be adequate symbols of the unity and the vocation of this congregation ought to be among the minister's ideals. As the repre-

⁵ E.g. *Ad Trall.*, 13:1; *Ad Phil.*, 11:2; *Ad Smyrn.*, 12:1.

⁶ Collegiality, in Vatican Council II, refers in the first place to the relations of the Bishops together and with the Bishop of Rome; but it rests also upon the principle that the whole Church, including the People, believe, pray, act together as the Body of Christ:

Indoles sacra et organice exstructa communitatis sacerdotalis et per sacramenta et per virtutes ad actum deducitur. Fideles per baptismum in Ecclesia incorporati, ad cultum religionis christianae caractere deputantur et, in filios Dei regenerati, fidem quam a Deo per Ecclesiam acceperunt coram hominibus profiteri tenentur. Sacramento confirmationis perfectius Ecclesiae vinculantur, speciali Spiritus Sancti robore ditantur, sicque ad fidem tamquam veri testes Christi verbo et opere simul diffundendam et defendendam arctius obligantur. Sacrificium eucharisticum, totius vitae christianae fontem et culmen, participantes, divinam Victimam Deo offerunt atque seipsos cum Ea; ita tum oblatione tum sacra communione, non promiscue sed alii aliter, omnes in liturgica actione partem propriam agunt. Porro corpore Christi in sacra synaxi refecti, unitatem Populi Dei, quae hoc augustissimo sacramento apte significatur et mirabiliter efficitur, modo concreto exhibent (*De Ecclesia*, n.11).

sentative of the congregation, the minister should be esthetically accepted by those he represents, and therefore esthetically acceptable to them.

At this level, the expression, favored by many Protestant authors, of "representative ministry" seems to make sense, although this is not the sense in which it is commonly taken.⁷ The task of representation belongs to the minister's responsibility in approaching liturgical celebration; but it also belongs to that of all the members of the Body. The minister has a higher degree of responsibility and of representativeness: his gestures should interpret the spiritual attitudes of the whole congregation; his appearance should constitute an invitation to worship; his deportment should evoke the sense of the sacred, so that the People should not hesitate to trust him as their representative, the first member of their brotherhood, the symbol of their purpose, the interpreter of their needs, the translator of their aspirations and the poet of their desires.

In an ecumenical situation, I would like to see this in the perspective of the function of the minister as "presbyter" or "elder." The elder is the person who has been trusted to perform certain functions, not because these could not be fulfilled by others, but because someone has to be entrusted with them and he is trustworthy. He is the sage, the wise man, the person of experience. But he has to earn this trust. This is not a question of a given sacrament and there can be no aura of *operis operati* here. It requires mutual understanding, sharing the same orientations, sounding on the same wavelengths, so that an interior kinship with him is experienced by the congregation.

Yet this representative function is of the order of the visible and the audible, for it is by what he sees and hears when the minister leads the congregation that the layman can appreciate (or not) the minister's way of leading the liturgy. As such it is to be seen on the background of the artistic contribution to the Eucharistic celebration, with liturgical singing, architecture, iconography, painting, sculpture.⁸ The minister has a choreographic function, even when the choreography is reduced to a minimum. One could find, in his understanding of his gestures, and in the corresponding impression—in good or in bad—

⁷ This expression is also found in some Anglican authors: "This ordained ministry, which is priestly because the whole ministry of the church is priestly, is in the strict sense representative, not vicarious." (J. A. T. Robinson, *On Being the Church in the World*, London, 1960, p. 79). Obviously, the priest cannot do more than the Church can do, but he does more in the Liturgy than represent the Church.

⁸ Vatican Council II, *Constitution De Liturgia*, ch. VII.

made on the People, some elements for a theology of gesture and of speech.

III. THE MINISTER AS PRIEST

We now come to the point of view of the minister as "priest," that is, as the recipient of a special sacrament or Ordination which gives him a new function, for which he is not only delegated by the People but to which he has been called by God. We need not survey here the scriptural and patristic evidence for the existence of the priesthood as a special sacrament. Since the Reformation, Western Christians have been divided on this point in two groups. For the Catholic-Orthodox tradition, the priesthood is a sacrament conferred by the bishop on selected persons, who alone are empowered to preside over the Eucharist and to provide the Christian people with most of the sacraments. For the Protestant tradition in general, there is no Christian priesthood besides the general priesthood of all believers.⁹ Ministers are selected by the Church to perform liturgical and other services, but the distinction between them is vocational and functional rather than sacramental. We need not either raise the question whether or not this is a correct interpretation of the doctrine of the major reformers. A recent study of Calvin's conception of the ministry denies it.¹⁰ As far as modern Calvinists are concerned, this remains however an academic question, hardly touching the core of the life of the Reformed Churches. The problem of the exact thought and purpose of the Reformers becomes much more delicate in relation to the Anglican communion, for if the preface to the Ordinal seems to be clear in the positive direction, Article XXV seems equally clear in the negative. Yet it would seem to me that the gesture of Ordination, even in the most Protestant of traditions, throws deeper roots and reaches further than the theology of it, and is implicitly sacramental. If this could be admitted by all, the Catholic-Protestant polemic on the sixth sacrament would prove to be without ultimate justification.

The priestly function in the Eucharistic celebration should not be analyzed according to the outline commonly adopted in Roman Catholic theology since the Council of Trent: the Eucharist as sacrament and as sacrifice, for this categorization, which largely results from the controversies of the Reformation, still carries polemical implications.

⁹ Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers* (Minneapolis, 1960).

¹⁰ Leopold Schummer, *Le Ministère Pastoral dans l'Institution Chrétienne de Calvin à la Lumière du Troisième Sacrament* (Wiesbaden, 1965).

An ecumenical approach should consider the Eucharist in its entire reality, as sacrament, sacrifice, sacred meal, worship, initiation, and whatever else it also is. Accordingly, I propose to survey the minister's function from the standpoint of his experience as he presides over the Eucharist. This experience seems to be focused on four main points.

The minister acts as initiator into a mystery, in the double sense of this word, which implies both the introduction into something hidden, and the revelation or unveiling of it. He continues the initiation begun with baptism and pursued in confirmation, namely the initiation of the people into the mystery of Christ's passion, death, resurrection and ascension, the four points explicitly mentioned in the anamnesis of most traditional anaphoras.¹¹ This initiation leads into a participation in a past event, the *ephapax* of the death and resurrection of the Lord. In other words, it is a "memorial," not in the weakened sense of remembrance popularized by Zwingli and already prepared by the nominalist tradition,¹² which accented in a nearly Pelagian fashion the task and work of the man who remembers, but in the strong sense of the Church Fathers: it is the re-presentation, the making present of the sacred actions of Christ.¹³ The minister need not, and of course cannot, perform these again; he performs the ritual actions that will be the symbols of the events of Redemption. Here, symbol is to be taken in the same strong sense as memorial: it implies participation in the symbolized reality. Thus, the minister does not remind the congregation of the acts of Christ; he does not act out liturgical actions similar to them; rather he introduces the people into communion with Christ who performs the acts of Redemption, so that all who partake of the celebration themselves become, through their union to the Savior, secondary subjects of the *acta et passa Christi*. Here precisely lies the mystery: the death and resurrection of Christ are revealed in and through the liturgy. It is correct to say, as scholastic and post-reformation sacramental theology commonly does, that the priest acts *in persona Christi*;¹⁴ yet the whole People of God too

¹¹ Even when the Passion alone is mentioned in liturgical texts, it has the full sense of the *acta et passa Christi*. Cf. Odon Casel, *La Fête de Pâques dans l'Eglise des Pères* (Paris, 1963).

¹² See Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 271-280.

¹³ To re-present is to be understood in the sense of making present, of showing the reality of, Redemption, not in the nominalist sense of representing by imitation. Cf. Gabriel Biel, "Ibi in veritate passionis qua pro nobis occisus est, hic in figura et imitatione passionis ejus, qua Christus non iterum vere patitur, sed ipsius verae passionis memoria quotidie nobis iteratur" (quoted in Oberman, p. 274, n.95).

¹⁴ *De Liturgia*, n.33.

acts *in persona Christi*, for it is introduced into unity with Christ doing the deeds of Redemption, reconciling the world to the Father, bringing creation to its climax in the glorification of the Lord Incarnate. The minister, in this process, leads the congregation; he passes first, at least ritually, into the mystery, followed by all those who associate themselves with what he does. His task is therefore twofold. He invites the people to enter the mystery: morally, to place themselves in the required conditions of repentance and *metanoia*; spiritually, to become attentive to the Spirit; liturgically, to participate in the collective action of worship which at the same time provides the context in which they enter the mystery, and results from their entering the mystery. Yet this is more than an invitation: it is essentially an initiation. By performing the liturgical action, the priest brings the mystery to the People and leads the People into the mystery. He unveils the hiddenness. He shows forth the secret hitherto hidden away in God. He reveals Christ dying and resurrecting.

According to the traditional shape of the liturgy, this revelation takes the form of a progressive survey of the acts of God, the Father, the Son, the Spirit: creation, redemption, sanctification; the eternal present, the past *ephapax*, which persists among us in the Eucharist, the future eschatology, which is anticipated in the work of the Spirit. One cannot or should not isolate the work of Christ from the works of the Trinity. His death and resurrection are part of the larger pattern of God's life, which descends toward man in love, creating him and seeking him out. The task of the minister as initiator into this mystery was clearer in the early practice of *ex tempore* liturgical prayer according to a set pattern, for the minister then had to bring the assistance into the mystery out of the fullness of his own understanding of it. A similar function still remains with our fixed prayers: the minister has to bring their meaning out by his way of speaking them.

It is, I believe, this mystagogical function of the minister which justifies his ordination as a warrant provided by the Church that the liturgy will not be dominated by the minister's subjectivity. Fixed forms of the liturgy came as consequences of the fundamental fact that the minister does not act in the name of himself, his experience, his theology, but in the name of the Lord. Yet a stable shape of Thanksgiving would not suffice, without an ontological link between the minister and Christ's own priesthood by way of sacramental Ordination. This also guarantees that the People relate themselves truly to the Lord, rather than to the minister's spiritual achievements and to

whatever other appeal he may enjoy. The sacramental function requires a sacramental person.

The mystery into which we are initiated by the liturgy and especially by the Eucharist, not only implies our sharing in the events of the death and resurrection of Christ; further, it makes this participation constitutive of our worship. We are not initiated into a doctrine, a teaching, a past event and its present sequels, but into the relationship which joins the Son with the Father in worship. The worship of the Father by the Incarnate Lord becomes our worship, so that we have no other prayer than his, no other obedience than his perfect obedience, no other will than his will to fulfil the Father's purpose. We are initiated into a life of total prayer. Yet it is not Jesus as setting us an example of prayer that we are taught by the Eucharist to look up to and to imitate: in a much more realistic relationship we enter his offering of himself to become "one victim with him." This contains the principle of several other aspects of the ministerial function.

In the Eucharistic celebration, the minister acts as *hierarch*, in the meaning of this term in patristic literature: he is a teacher, who teaches not so much by explaining a doctrine (although he also does this) as by transmitting to others the lights which he has himself received. The hierarch is not a superior, but a "transmitter," the channel of a Tradition. What this Tradition is appears from the nature of what takes place in Eucharistic worship. We can express it with the words of St. Paul:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor., 11:23-26).

This is a Tradition of holy things, of a numinous reality, namely that on a certain day, at a certain meal, the Lord gave himself to the disciples, his body and his blood, all his person and all his life. By so doing, he sealed a new Covenant, the eternal one, not a Covenant destined to be superseded, but the one that persists and subsists at all times, and especially at the present moment, when we eat this bread and drink this cup.

This Tradition of the bread and the wine implies continuity with the past Eucharists and the Last Supper, and discontinuity, insofar as the externals of our celebration change constantly.¹⁵ The minister testifies to, embodies, continuity in his own person; he enables the congregation to gather itself together out of the discontinuous, spread out, broken time of the many lives that make it up, into the continuity of faithful participation in the one Eucharist, effected by the one priesthood at the one altar. Out of multiplicity, the Church comes into unity.¹⁶ From one Eucharist to another, the minister watches over this Eucharistic unity of which he is the guardian, and which is always threatened by the necessary multiplicity of callings and vocations. Within the Eucharistic celebration, this function of transmitting the treasury of the Church which, in the words of Luther, is "the most holy Gospel of God's glory and grace,"¹⁷ is translated by the celebrant's desire to emphasize the core of the mystery, the central elements, the meaning of what is done, rather than the external or less important points of the celebration. Since the liturgy, in the course of time, has unavoidably given rise to regulations, embodied in rubrics, the priest has to make sure that the rubrics do not harden into a Spirit-stifling letter. Christian worship must be a worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23); the true worshippers are those who present the "pure offering" announced by the prophet Malachi (Mal. 1:11). And the true Tradition is the transmission of the Gospel, not of human inventions or devices.

Thus, the priest in the Eucharistic celebration transmits the Gospel, the Gospel of course being understood, not in the first place as a set of doctrines, a law, or a statement about Christ and the work of redemption, but as the transmission of Redemption itself in the acts of the passion and resurrection. For the Eucharist is the Redemption reaching us in a continuing act of Christ; it is the ritual of redemption, the breaking of the body and the shedding of the blood for the redemption of many. As the first Eucharist, at the Last Supper, anticipated the actual passion and resurrection, the subsequent Eucharists

¹⁵ Although it is excessive, Lacordaire's identification of Tradition and Sacrifice contains the profound truth that the Church, in the Eucharist, perpetuates the Tradition of the Last Supper and the Sacrifice of Christ. ("Le sacrifice, ou la Tradition, car c'est la même chose . . .", in "9th Conference at Notre Dame de Paris," 1836; cf. Yvonne Frontier, ed., *L'Eglise dans l'Oeuvre du Père Lacordaire*, Paris, 1963, p. 106).

¹⁶ The question of concelebration should be seen in this context. See J. McGowan, *Concelebration*, New York, 1964; Basil Minchin, *Every Man in his Ministry* (London, 1960).

¹⁷ 62nd Thesis (Oct. 31, 1517).

prolong this unique event by bringing the People of God to it. The priest therefore is the trusted agent of the Church for the transmission of the Gospel, for bringing the reality of redemption to the People. The Eucharist is the good news as communicated in fact. The celebration is an instrument through which Christ introduces men into the fellowship of salvation.

The priest is therefore also, in the Eucharist, a teacher or *minister of the Word*. For the good news which he brings in handing on, transmitting, the body and the blood of Christ he also has to explain, so that the People will consciously and intelligently find Christ, will truly hear the Word, and will be able eventually to speak it. As minister of the Word, the priest functions in a way which is analogical to his task as chief traditioner of the bread and wine: he breaks the bread of the Word and presents it to the People. This entails his own availability to the Word, his readiness to listen, his habit of pondering over the Word in his heart, his being prepared, by study, to understand the Scriptures in their letter, in their history, but also, by knowledge of the Tradition and habitual contemplation of the analogy of faith, to discover the sense of the Spirit, the spiritual sense or senses of the Scriptures; and finally, thanks to his sensitivity to the signs and the needs of the times, to formulate these senses adequately for his contemporary audience. This is done especially in the homily, by which, as Vatican Council II says; "the mysteries of faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the Sacred Text" (*Const. de Liturgia*, n.502).

The task of breaking the Word is not exhausted by the "liturgy of the Word," and it persists throughout the Eucharistic celebration; for the mystery of the Eucharist is couched in language. On account of semantic evolution, words degenerate and disintegrate; their meaning varies and their shades disappear. This is obviously the reason why all Churches have developed liturgical languages, in which a hieratic conservatism of forms counteracts the shifting meanings of the vernacular. In this case, the priest should find ways of emphasizing and accenting the liturgical language so that the essence of its sacred meaning is still conveyed. When, in reaction to this, an attempt is made to have a wholly vernacular liturgy, the priest should see to it that his use of the vernacular preserves the sacred depth which the People should perceive through the words, in which the very familiarity of the medium tends to hide. In any case, the priest acts as master of a medium of communication, the Word, which has its anti-

type in God himself and therefore cannot be treated simply from the technical point of view of audio-visual aids to worship. The use of the Word—be it in the reading of liturgical texts, in the homily or in the other ad-libital parts of the liturgy (like the “prayer of the faithful”), in the liturgical greetings, in the collects—is destined to introduce hearers to the mystery of the Word.

In relation to the Word, the function of the minister is only propedeutic, introductory. He cannot be the Word, but he must provide the Word with a mouth or, to use another metaphor, with a platform. Using all his human talents, his theological training, his spiritual experience, he has to make himself transparent, to open himself both to God and to his listeners, so that through what he says they may perceive the true Word, “which enlightens every man that comes into the world.” The spoken word in the liturgical service is not an eighth sacrament, yet it has sacramental value;¹⁸ and the minister, announcing the Gospel, explaining the liturgy, presenting to the People the mystery of the Word made flesh “for us and for our salvation,” bringing them into the fellowship of heaven, giving them an insight into the present and future reality of the kingdom of God, acts in a capacity which is qualitatively different from that of an orator, a lecturer, a psychologist, a counsellor. He acts sacramentally, as channel of the Word. This is also qualitatively distinct from the openness to the Word which may be that of anyone who speaks, including the priest himself outside of his liturgical function. The latter is the experience of the prophet, who can prophecy whether he knows it or not. The former is the experience of the priest, who, in the liturgy, does not act only in the guidance of the Spirit, but as medium and instrument of the mission of the Word.

It is therefore in relation to the Second Person of the Trinity that the function of the minister as minister of the Word is to be understood. As the Word himself in his human life had the task of preparing the People to receive the Spirit, whom he prayed the Father to send on the disciples and who was released on the day of Pentecost, the minister's task is to help the People of God to sense the Spirit. The Word is spoken in order to open the way to the Spirit; and it is

¹⁸ The close relationship of word and rite gives the word its sacramental value. Cf. *De Liturgia*, n.35. Compare with *De Revelatione*, n.21; *De Ministerio et Vita Presbyterorum*, n.4; *De Ecumenismo*, n.21. See also Louis Bouyer, *Rite and Man, Notre Dame*, 1963 (ch. 4: Word and Rite); Bernard Cooke: *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, New York, 1965 (ch. 9: The Eucharist as Word).

only when the Spirit becomes active in a congregation that the Word has indeed been spoken.

Thus once more, the function of the minister is set in Trinitarian light. For the Spirit himself brings the People to the Father. To sanctify means to bring into the realm of the Father's holiness, and the task of the Spirit is one of sanctification. As a result, no man, not even the minister himself, can assess with certainty the efficiency of his ministry. This lies in the area of the sanctification of the People of God, of which ultimately only the Father can judge, and the one to whom judgment has been entrusted, the Son.

This throws some further light on the ministry seen in an ecumenical perspective. On the one hand, it is a mistake to claim spiritual “validity” (in the Protestant sense of being blessed by the Spirit) for any Church's ministry, as though this could be assessed at face-value or measured. Such a validity can only be an object of hope; it cannot be asserted as a cherished possession.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Catholic concept of canonical validity (meaning recognition by the Church) can only apply to visible facts falling under the judgment of the Church's leaders, e.g., whether a man has been duly ordained, whether he has presided over the Eucharist in the traditional way (or in a way which is compatible with the Catholic tradition), whether he has preached a homily, whether what he has said agrees with doctrinal standards. Such a concept cannot apply to what takes place only in the realm of the Spirit's free and sometimes unforeseen activity, e.g., what degree of presence of Christ there may be or there actually is in a Eucharist otherwise judged invalid; what effectiveness a minister has, even if he has not been duly ordained, etc. In other words, the function of the minister provides a standard to judge his ministry in his Church; it throws no light on ministry in other Churches.

We thus come to the last aspect of the minister's function in the Eucharistic celebration. The memorial of the passion of the Lord, the preaching of the Gospel, the speaking of the Word, take place in the context of a *re-enactment of the Last Supper*. The worship of the People of God takes the form of a sacred meal, even though this meal has been reduced, in the course of time, to its bare elements, the prayer of thanksgiving which accompanies the blessing and eating of bread at the beginning, and the blessing and drinking of wine at the

¹⁹ Many of the problems of Church mergers arise from the wish to recognize this validity in the Churches concerned. But this validity is purely spiritual, and the Churches can only judge it canonically: hence a theological impasse.

end, of the Jewish Chaburah meal. I need not enter into the controversy on the identity of the Last Supper: was it the Paschal meal or not? In any case, the Last Supper remains a sacred meal. And the Christian Supper has preserved, in spite of a drastic stylization, the characteristic of a meal: food is brought in, blessed, distributed and eaten. The minister is therefore also at the same time the president of a meal, a toast-master and, keeping in mind the relation between the washing of feet and the Last Supper, a servant waiting on the needs of the congregation.

This function is becoming more obvious with the current streamlining of the Catholic liturgy, the simplification of altars, their orientation so that the priest faces the congregation, the predominance of the stance over the kneeling position: all these are welcome signs that the celebrant still acts as a food server, this food being now that of the Christian soul. One may wish that celebrants could be still more aware of this aspect of their function, and that further means could be adopted to bring it to the fore: the simplification of vestments, the re-orientation of Churches around the table, the suppression of the "communion rail" which is an unneeded duplicate of the main table, the use of bread rather than hosts, the continuation of the fellowship of the Table through a common meal afterwards, etc.

It seems to me that the emphasis on the meal aspect of the Eucharist and the corresponding function of the minister should be understood mainly in the context of the scriptural meaning of the meal as an eschatological, parousiac event. The meal of the Christian People is the one during which they "announce the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. 11:26), that is, during which they look forward to his second and final coming. The minister fulfills this task by emphasizing the parousiac expectation and by making the People eschatologically aware. We are gathered for the meal of communion between heaven and earth, to witness the moment when, by the ascension of Christ, creation returns to the Creator, taking its place in the realm of the full glory of God, when, by the descent into inferno, the Lord Jesus transforms the cosmic roots of life and thus enables the universe to make headway in the direction of "point Omega," the manifestation of the cosmic Christ.²⁰ All this comes within our human experience by the meal of communion, in which we already participate, as the parables of the bridegroom and the bride indicate, in the return

²⁰ Teilhard de Chardin: *La Messe sur le Monde*.

of all things to God. Thus the priest should open the mind of the People to the cosmic dimension of the liturgy and give them the sense of expectation, of joy at the prospect of the advent of Christ which should be theirs, but which the cares and concerns of this life tend to stifle.

Thus, the priest takes on the added task of leading the People into the contemplative life. For the contemplative life consists in placing the cares of heaven before those of the earth, in pursuing the *unum necessarium* which is none other than awareness of the final dimension of Christ: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me . . ." (Apoc., 22:12). The communion meal now prepares the faithful for their eternal banquet in the house of the Lord, when Jesus will "drink again of the fruit of the vine" (Lk., 22:18). The celebrant should lead the People to the knowledge that they now (symbolically in communion under one species, and more realistically in the sharing of the cup) drink of the fruit of the vine in order to acquire the foretaste of the fellowship of the New Jerusalem, when God will be all in all and the wine of his love will transform the water of human shortcomings, when the vision face to face will take the place of imperfect faith.

Before concluding, a question should be anticipated, which would be suggested by the polemical situation out of which we are slowly emerging. I have said nothing explicitly in this essay about the task of the minister in relation to a point of Catholic theology on which much theological discussion in the past was focussed: the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

The Council of Trent, session XXII (1562), devoted a whole Constitution to the subject of the Mass as a sacrifice. The following statement sums up the Tridentine doctrine:

And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence (D.S., n.1743).

Much of the literature about priesthood since then has insisted on the task of the priest as a "sacrificer," the one who offers the sacrifice of

propitiation.²¹ I have carefully avoided this approach in my essay. But this avoidance lies open to criticism from two sides. On the one hand, am I trying to tone down a Catholic doctrine to make it more palatable to other Christian traditions? Is this Catholic enough and does it do justice to the Council of Trent? This question could be asked by a Roman Catholic. On the other hand, a Protestant might ask a similar question: Is it legitimate to express the Catholic concept of priesthood without placing the notion of sacrifice at the center of the exposition?

It should be said of course that the doctrine of the Council of Trent on the Mass as a sacrifice remains the doctrine of the Catholic Church, although the notion of sacrifice does not exhaust the fullness of the liturgical action. But this does not imply that one should always emphasize this aspect of the Eucharist. In the richness of the Eucharistic celebration, each age focuses attention on what seems more appealing to its concerns and circumstances, without however rejecting any Catholic doctrine and any other legitimate aspect of the Eucharistic event.

Accordingly, for the Catholic faith, the priest, today as in the past, offers to God the Father the sacrifice of Christ. The very same sacrifice offered once for all at the Last Supper and on the Cross now continues to be presented, offered, to the Father by the Church. The whole Church, and therefore the whole congregation, offers it. The priest gathers together the prayers and intentions of the Church and presents them to God in her name: this is the meaning of the collect. The Church also associates herself to Christ's sacrifice through the *anaphora* which the priest recites. In this, the priest acts as instrument of the Church associating herself with Christ's sacrifice, and as instrument of Christ presenting himself, through the liturgical words, before the Father with the stigmata of his sufferings marked in his resurrected flesh. To discuss whether the mass is a "new" sacrifice or only a participation in the unique sacrifice of the Cross seems to me a purely semantic argument, depending on various ways of understanding "new" and of defining "sacrifice."

²¹ Admittedly, this emphasis came largely from a reaction against such statements as that of Article XXXI: "Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." For an irenic estimate of the situation in regard to Lutheran-Catholic relations, see James F. McCue: "Luther and Roman Catholicism on the Mass as Sacrifice" (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 1965, pp. 205-233.) See also Bernard Cooke, ch. 8, "The Eucharist as Sacrifice."

IV. ECUMENICAL CONCLUSIONS

I have tried to outline the function of the minister in the Eucharistic celebration in a way which is fully Catholic and on which it would be possible, I believe, to reach an ecumenical consensus. It is my opinion that such a consensus—not only on the function of the priest, but also on the related matter of the nature of the liturgical action—should be preliminary to consideration of the possibility of inter-communion. The unity of all Christians on the basis of baptism needs to be completed by unity on the basis of Christian initiation in all its phases (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist) before they can form one family around the one Table of the Lord. They must at least agree on what they do in the Eucharistic service, which should in turn lead to a discussion of the ways and means by which ministers are "ordained": Are they ordained in the sense of being sent by a Congregation, set apart by the Church for a special office, or still consecrated through a sacrament?

A full study of these matters would raise the question: who is a legitimate minister of the Eucharist? And since this is a grave pending question between the Roman Catholic and most other Communion, a word should be said about it here. It is not my purpose to enter the discussion of Anglican Orders, but to suggest in what way the problem of ministries in general ought to be approached.

I have made a distinction between the minister acting as *elder* or trusted delegate of the community, and the minister acting as sacramental person, set apart by the community or its representatives in order to receive sacramental Ordination. In the first capacity, he is *presbyter*, in the etymological sense of the word; in the second he is *priest*, in the traditional meaning of this term. Catholic thought has accented the priestly character of the minister, at the same time paying little attention to the minister as elder among the People, whereas Protestant thought is, by and large, agreed on the minister as elder, but not on his function as priest. From the standpoint of Catholic thought, there should be no difficulty in acknowledging the ministers of Protestant Churches to be legitimate elders in their communities, and thus recognizing that, despite the lack of a doctrine of sacramental Orders, they have ecclesiological status beyond that of baptized laymen.

As for the Churches which, like the Anglican communion, claim priestly status in the proper sense for their ministers, I would suggest

that recognition of this status should depend on mainly two factors: Do its ministers function as priests? Does the Anglican Church teach the traditional Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist and the sacrament of Orders? These are the two fundamental problems. Until they are answered satisfactorily, the historical question of the transmission of the sacrament of Orders in the past, and especially at the time of the Reformation, remains an academic point.²² In other words, I would first ask what is the consensus of Anglican belief and teaching on the Eucharist and on Orders. A decision of recognition or non-recognition of Orders could be made on this basis, even without reaching absolute certainty (difficult or impossible to obtain in any case in historical questions) about the transmission of Orders by apostolic succession in the past. The question directly raised by this paper is the first: Do ministers function as priests and not only as elders?

One more step may be tentatively envisaged. For there is no reason to restrict this approach to Anglican Orders. The reality of the laying on of hands according to apostolic practice implies an intentionality of its own which is no more fully negated by theological denials than it is fully expressed by theological endorsements. Life in the body of the Church is richer than its doctrinal expression. We may therefore wonder if, where the intention has remained to provide for the continuity of the preaching of the Gospel according to Christ's design, the reality of the sacrament has not passed into the laying on of hands practiced in the Churches issued from the reformation, albeit outside normal episcopal channels and despite Protestant sacramental doctrines or the lack of them.²³ In such a case, what has been said

²² At any rate, the contemporary conception of historical science would not permit a decision on Anglican Orders, whether favorable or not to their genuineness, to be based mainly on a historical study of the 16th century. For history can reach probability but not absolute certainty. The 19th century, the age of historicism, proceeded from history, as in the encyclical *Apostolicae Curae*, to a certainty which seems too absolute to our sense of the historical.

²³ Vatican II's decree on Ecumenism contains the following passage: *Communitates ecclesiales a nobis sejunctae, quamvis deficiat earum plena nobiscum unitas ex baptismo profluens, et quamvis credamus illas, praesertim propter Sacramenti Ordinis defectum, genuinam atque integram substantiam Mysterii eucharistici non servasse, tamen, dum in Sancta Coena mortis et resurrectionis Domini memoriam faciunt, vitam in Christi communiione significari profitentur atque gloriosum Ejus adventum exspectant. Quapropter doctrina circa Coenam Domini, cetera sacramenta et cultum ac Ecclesiae ministeria objectum dialogi constituat oportet* (n.22).

This text opens the possibility for Catholic theology of recognizing some Eucharistic reality in Protestant Communion Services; but, in the Catholic analogy of faith, this implies that we also recognize some reality of the sacrament of Orders in the Protestant ministry.

above concerning recognition of Anglican Orders would also obtain in regard to the Protestant ministry.

Since the question of Orders is more frequently raised today in the form of questions about the possibility of inter-communion, I should note to what conclusion the present paper would lead me. One of the minister's functions in the Eucharistic celebration is to act as a member of the People, united to it by Baptism; the priest must also be recognized by the People as its worthy representative before the Lord in the Thanksgiving prayer. It follows that he should act as guardian of the communion in which he has been ordained and which he serves. In other words, he may admit the members of other Churches to the common Table of his own only to the extent that his Church holds that, in spite of existing divergences and breaks of unity, the Churches concerned still belong to one Communion. I believe that we find such a principle at the basis of what Vatican Council II has said about participating in communion with the Orthodox Church.²⁴ On the same basis, the Vatican Council has shown itself much more reticent on the matter of inter-communion with "separated Churches and ecclesial communities in the West."²⁵ What is lacking here at this time, unlike the situation in the Orthodox Church, is precisely a Catholic consensus on the related sacraments of the Eucharist and the Orders. The practical question of inter-communion may be raised but cannot be solved until the Churches have reached a consensus in which one can recognize the traditional faith on the Eucharist and the ministry.

²⁴ *De Ecumenismo*, n.15; *De Ecclesii Ritus Orientalis*, n.26.

²⁵ Whereas the principles on *Communicatio in Sacris* contained in *De Ecumenismo*, n.8, are applied by the Council itself to the situation of the Orthodox Christians (n.15), the Council leaves their application to the situation of the "Churches and ecclesial Communities of the West" to further theological reflection.