The liturgical rites of the meal and the sacrifice

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Introduction

It is the desire and purpose of every religion to ensure, in the most appropriate manner possible, a relationship between humankind and the divine (*religio – religare*). This is expressed not only in doctrines, but also in rites, which is the very essence of liturgy: it is always the expression of theological truths and is also rooted in a heritage that sometimes stretches back to the dawn of time. Others at this conference will demonstrate this in greater detail. Our aim will therefore be – necessarily in a succinct and brief manner – to show how the Christian conception of creation and Redemption is reflected in sacred rites, those of the sacrament and the meal, and what is the meaning of what is thus celebrated, taking into account the development that has taken place since the Old Covenant. If faith is authentic, it is expressed in the rites; if the rites are truly Catholic, they express the faith. 'As the Church set out in her prayer of thanksgiving the main points of her doctrine on God, on creation and on Redemption, the Eucharist was a kind of preaching. However, as the canon served less for the instruction of the congregation than for the worship due to God, the expression of sacred doctrines became a public and communal profession of faith. We can thus understand how Saint Irenaeus saw in the letter of Saint Clement of Rome, inspired by the liturgy, an exposition of the tradition of faith .[2] "Although considered by some to be outdated, the question here concerns *form*, in the German sense *of Gestalt*. Cardinal Ratzinger explains it thus: 'The form in which the Mass is presented is not an accumulation of ceremonies, more or less haphazard and deriving its form solely from purely legal grounds, superimposed on a dogmatic core which, ultimately, remains untouched by it, but rather the intimate expression of the spiritual reality that manifests itself in this way. This is why it was a matter of recognising, behind the randomness of each individual rite, the overarching *form* and, at the same time, the key that grants access to the essence of Eucharistic reality. Only in this way could the specific liturgical framework emerge in relation to the dogmatic and canonical framework. "[3]

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2 O. CASEL, The Memorial of the Lord, p. 41.

3 J. RATZINGER, The Celebration of Faith, p. 34.

"All the sacraments are directed towards the Eucharist "[4]. The Church instinctively gathers round the real presence [e5]. The terminology of the Mass itself provides illuminating insight: from the New Testament onwards, we most frequently encounter expressions such as "the Lord's Supper " (1 Cor 11:20–33), 'breaking of bread' (Lk 24:30–35, Acts 2:42, etc.), 'Eucharist' (in St Justin, St Irenaeus, Tertullian), 'sacrifice' (in St Augustine and St Leo).

Through the fundamental concepts of sacrament and meal, the relationships that unite and distinguish dogma and liturgy will become clearer, whilst also revealing the continuity, coupled with a certain break, between the Synagogue and the Church, and also between Christ and the Church.

1. Fundamental

Concepts: Sacrifice

Among religious acts, one of the most constant is that of offering something to the deity. Not that the deity needs it, but because it is an act of worship that demonstrates that all creation depends on the deity who creates and sustains all being. This notion of offering and worship is expressed through a kind of tearing and destruction: we deserve to return to nothingness (in the Christian faith this is even more pronounced since the rupture of original sin), but God sustains us in his benevolence when we acknowledge it; this is the first movement.

Second movement: we keep something of the victim to eat, to commune with it, to become one with the offered victim. When Saint Paul speaks of communion, he associates it with the notion of a meal (1 Cor 10:18)[6]. Here we find the essential subordination of communion to [the sacrifice 7]. It is indeed a sacred meal. For the sacrifice to be true, there must be participation through love and adoration; then, when possible, through eating. And since the Mass is Jesus himself, he plants within us the seed of love and adoration. Through Communion, we are invited to enter into his sacrifice, not only to be saved by him, but to be consumed by his desire to save the world. For this, we must always offer something [precious ux8].

In the act of sacrifice, there is an act of worship, which depends on the virtue of religion; it consists in offering visible things to an invisible Reality. But within, there must be faith and charity

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4ST THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 65, a. 3.

5Cf. C. JOURNET: *The Mass*, p. 281 ff. The author gives fine examples drawn from ancient and modern hagiography.

6The Apostle deals similarly with the problem of idol-eaters (1 Cor 8).

7'This is fundamental. We must not concede anything on this point. It is not primarily a meal; it is primarily a sacrifice. When it comes to Christ, what a sacrifice we share in through the act of eating! " (C. JOURNET, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar*, Photocopied notes from two homilies on Sunday 23 May 1971, p. 2).

8Cf. the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–6) or that of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:11–13).

theological. This shift is evident in the development of the Old Testament itself, which eventually replaced blood sacrifices with spiritual sacrifices [s9]. We move from the sacrifice of meat to plant-based offerings – which become the bread and wine of the Last Supper – and from temple sacrifice to the sacred meal without sacrifice [e10]. Similarly, the Eucharistic vocabulary in Philo of Alexandria conveys a highly sacrificial character [l11]. The *Didache* summarises the same idea as follows: 'On the Lord's Day, gather together for the breaking of bread and the Eucharist, after confessing your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure.' [12]

Christ's sacrifice inaugurates a new kingdom, a new kind of relationship between humanity and God: the Cross of Christ renders the ancient sacrifices obsolete [ns13]. Grafted as members of his body, Christians have 'full assurance' of free access to God [14]. The following specific features can be noted in the liturgical vocabulary of the New Testament:

- reference to the Paschal mystery: it is only through Christ that it finds its legitimate foundation (Eph 2:21; Heb 13:15; Col 2:7)
- it is a spiritual worship, worship in spirit and in truth (cf. Jn 4:23–24), not an interiority to the point of being disembodied and thus abolishing rites, but a worship animated by faith and charity, by the divine *pneuma* and in *the aletheia*
- ecclesial dimension: the purpose of participating in the sacrifice is to form the holy Temple of God inhabited by the Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:19 ff.)
- effect in 'secular' life: spiritual worship consists in this sacrificial offering of oneself (Rom 12:1) through a daily life of faith and charity (Phil 4:18).

Christ and the apostles continue the prophets' exhortations against hypocritical formalism. The radical novelty lies in the absolute purity and infinite value of Jesus' sacrifice, into which the entire activity of the Church—which makes him present throughout the centuries—will flow. The meticulousness of the ceremonial marks this respect and conviction, even though there is always the risk of performing the rites in a merely external manner.

Meal

Union with Christ's sacrifice is thus achieved through faith and love, manifested in the offering, acceptance of the grace through which God touches every soul of good will. But he wished

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9When Pseudo-Philo lists the religious festivals, he does not mention the blood sacrifices to be offered, but only the offering of bread for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and that of Weeks (*Book of Biblical Antiquities* 13, 4).

10PHILON, *Question on the Exodus* 2, 69.

11Cf. J. LAPORTE, *La doctrine catholique chez Philon d'Alexandrie*, Paris, 1972, p. 78.

12I, 14, 1–3.

13Heb 8–10 and especially 10:11.

14Heb 10:19 and 12:22–24

even more so through what Cardinal Journet calls a 'grace of contact '[15], that is to say, through the eating of the victim. Now, since the Last Supper, it is the Lamb himself. He has therefore taken on the appearance of bread and wine.

> 'How is it that Christ, who is to sacrifice himself on Good Friday on the bloody cross, is to give himself to be eaten so that we may participate in his sacrifice through the act of eating? On Good Friday, nothing is possible. On Holy Thursday at the time of the Last Supper, the sacrifice has already begun. The sacrifice is not merely the moment when Christ dies; it is the moment that precedes it. The sacrifice is already underway. The entire preceding period is not a single moment; it is a process with its first moment at the Last Supper. At that moment, he will make himself present under the appearance of bread which the apostles may receive: this communion at the Last Supper, because Christ, in the act of giving himself and going to die on the cross, is hidden under the appearance of bread. "[16]

The rite of the manducation therefore has a twofold effect on a personal level: the comfort of food when one is weakened (*viaticum*) and a sign of assimilation (*communio*); and an effect on the level of the Church:

> "To receive Communion of the bread and wine transformed into Christ is not to multiply Christ through contact with our multiplicity, but to unify our multiplicity through contact with his unity. It is not to draw a particular Christ to oneself, but to be cast together upon the one Christ. In the image of the movement of transubstantiation, which in the ontological order goes from bread and wine to Christ, communion is, in the moral order, a movement whose purpose is to lead from the multiplicity of Christ's presences, through the one cross, to the one Christ. It is impossible to commune thus with Christ without forming his mystical Body and his Kingdom" [17].

Among the Jews, there were numerous and varied meals (on the occasion of circumcisions, weddings, funerals, Sabbaths and also the annual Passover meal) accompanied by blessings – in Hebrew, *hodeah* or *todah*: the blessing is said over the bread to acknowledge God's sovereign rule; Greek vocabulary rendered these concepts as *eulogia* and *eucharistia*, two distinct yet related concepts. The meal as a ritual element of a group extends far beyond the scope of Judaism or early Christianity: sectarian or marginal movements, brotherhoods and

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15He explained the difference between Christ's spiritual and bodily presence through the Gospel account of the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:1–44): the two sisters, Martha and Mary, approach him saying, 'If only you had been here'. Yet he was there through his divine and spiritual presence. But for Lazarus to be raised from the dead, he still had to be physically present. (C. JOURNET, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,* pp. 13–14)

16C. JOURNET, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,* p. 4.

17C. JOURNET, *The Mass*, p. 254.

Guilds have meals governed by rites, taboos and tithes. The meal is a place of unity and a factor of cohesion.

The Christian community gathers around the same table every day (Acts 2:46, 5:42 and 6:1), on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) and on the Lord's Day (Rev 1:10). This gathering takes the form of a meal of charity (*diakonia*) and demonstrates the link between the Eucharist and charity. The distribution of goods on Friday, the eve of the Sabbath, shifted to the first day of the week, the day of collection (1 Cor 16:2: undoubtedly one of the earliest testimonies to the practice of the collection at Mass).

The Last Supper itself is presented precisely as a communal meal rather than a family meal following the Passover custom. Moreover, the texts are silent on the eating of the lamb and bitter herbs, or the three or four cups of the Jewish Passover ritual. We must therefore be careful not to equate the Last Supper too hastily with the traditional Passover meal. In this sense, it is misleading to simply say: the Mass is a meal. Whilst Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb and this point of connection persists in the early Christian tradition (1 Cor 5:7; Jn 15:36), there is a clear awareness here of a break and a new development. We are also familiar with St Paul's criticisms of the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:21 ff.), which would lead fairly quickly to the disappearance of the agape meals in favour of the Mass itself. At the same time, first-century Judaism foresaw the coming of the time
"when all sacrifices will be abolished, but the sacrifice of thanksgiving will not be abolished" (cf. Jer 33:11). With Christ, we enter the eschatological age of forgiveness and salvation, which brings the bloody sacrifices of the temple to an end. By the same token, the ancient ritual meals are condemned; the sacrifice itself will take a bloodless form, "something expressing the tragedy of the Cross, wrapped in the gentleness of the consecration of bread and wine "[18] and the Christian meal is the pre-eminent setting for this effective proclamation of God's saving action, taking the place directly of the Old Testament *todah*. The difference from the daily meal is marked by the wine: it is therefore a festive meal. "The sacrifice of praise" or *todah*, in the "offering of the lips", effectively proclaims salvation in the person of Jesus, who offers himself on the cross. The communal meal of Christian diaconia is the place of the gestural proclamation of salvation that flows from the sacrifice (cf. Heb 13:16).

We find all these elements in the practice of the Roman liturgy. 'There are two forms of mystical worship offered to God: one consists more in action, the other is more inclined towards contemplation. Many ancient peoples honoured their god through mystery cults, seeking to draw closer to him by reproducing and imitating his acts, performed long ago on earth at the time of his epiphany. This form was naturally better suited to the active temperament,

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18C. JOURNET, *Instruction on the Sacrificial Aspect of the Eucharist, Ad instar manus scripti*..

of Westerners. The Easterners were more inclined to lose themselves, through silent contemplation, in the infinite depths of the divine essence. These prayers, examples of which we find in the writings attributed to Hermes, were known as *the Eucharist*. ‘ ’[19]

2. The rites of the Mass

The account of the Last Supper is necessarily the starting point of the liturgy of the Mass. The Gospel already mentions to us certain elements of solemnisation; this need to solemnise, to amplify, to adorn will be reflected in words and deeds throughout the history of the liturgy.

> ‘Little by little, a vast and remarkable work thus took shape, and as time went on the interweaving became so close that now, beneath the fabric embroidered by the Bride’s piety for the glory of the Bridegroom, the network, the simple weave with which Christ was content in the first celebration, is scarcely visible. This frame has become so well set into the scene it adorns, it has been fixed there for so long, that on both sides the edges have merged; time has erased the line of joint.” [20]

We can therefore discover the essential rites in the New Testament:

1. bringing the bread and wine to the altar
2. the celebrant’s thanksgiving
3. he takes the bread, blesses it, repeats the words of Christ (institution), and does the same with the wine
4. breaking and communion

Offering

At the ordination of a new priest, the bishop lists his principal duties and simply says: **Sacerdotem oportet offerre**. Similarly, in the prayer following the consecration, the priest says: **Offerimus tibi**. The Latin verb **ob-ferre** itself means ‘to bring forward’. The introduction to the Preface includes the invocation *Sursum corda*. The *Gloria* begins with the words *In Excelsis*. The celebrant’s gesture at the start of the Canon, the high and low elevations, and the gesture presenting the Body of Christ at *the Domine non sum dignus* before distributing it to the faithful all convey the same idea, also expressed by the Greek word *anaphora*: ‘to bring up high’. For the being of God, which cannot be located anywhere, is nevertheless symbolically situated ‘on high’. There is therefore already, in every act of elevation, a movement of sacrifice in its infancy.

19O. CASEL, *The Memorial of the Lord*, p. 52.

20G. SIMONS, *The Perfect Sacrifice,* p. 46

The action of the Offertory is the preparation for sacrifice, the primordial gesture of the religious soul. In the Carthusian rite, the essence of the Offertory is limited to the gesture of raising the paten above the chalice, without any words. There is a kind of gratuitousness here: God certainly came down to us in the Incarnation, but he first elicits the gift of ourselves. The Roman liturgy sought very early on to have the congregation contribute to the offering, both personally and publicly. "The Word took on human flesh, received this flesh before offering it for the redemption of humanity, in the manner of the bishop who receives the offering from the faithful in order to offer it subsequently to God. "[21]

To this gratuitousness, God responds in the gift of communion: the parallel is marked by the two processions and the chant accompanying the offering and communion in the early Church [22]. In 305, the Council of Elvira forbade the acceptance of the offering from anyone who was not to receive communion (canon 28). The *Ordines Romani* describe this strictly hierarchical procession, from the Pope himself, through the high dignitaries, to the young orphan choirboys of the Lateran who bring what they can: a small cruet of wate [u23]. Clerics are not required to make an offering: *Clerici non offerunt nisi in exsequiis mortuorum et in nova celebratione sacerdotis. Nam inhumanum videretur, si ii offere tenerentur qui ex oblationibus vivunt* [aliorum] . [24]. We see here that the clergy lived partly on these offerings, as did the monks. A distinction is made between *donum* (generally in kind, silver or gold) and *sacrificium* (that which is used directly for the consecration). 'Included in the concept of the oblation are all the products of the rural economy, all objects for ecclesiastical or domestic use, and as far as possible there is a tendency to link them tangibly with the offertory procession. [25] One sometimes imagines the picturesque scenes of processions in which kitchenware and bedding were brought for the installation of a young priest, along with lambs, suckling pigs and all manner of poultry. In many places where such a custom exists, to symbolise the offering made to God, the donor walks around the altar. Given the abundance of these offerings, it is understandable that a synod in Braga in 572 forbade a bishop from consecrating a church that a lord had had built in order to reserve for himself half of the offerings brought there. All this was still to be found until recently in the procession of offerings during canonisations, and a similar solemn escort surrounded the King of France as he made his way to the offering on the day of his coronation . [26]. The conditions for admission to the offering are as strict as those concerning communion.

21St Augustine: *Enarrationes in Psalmum* 129, 7.

22Cf. St Augustine, *Retractationes* 2,11 (*PL* 32, col. 634) and St Ambrose, *In Psalmum* 118, prol. 2 (*PL* 15, col. 1198).

23Ord. I (*PL* 78, col. 943 ff.).

24Ord. VI (*PL* 202, col. 59).

25J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 2, p. 285.

26J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 2, p. 290.

It was not until much later that the link between offering and sacrifice began to weaken: it even became acceptable to accept a gift from a non-Catholic or even a pag , n. 27.

The parallel is therefore clear: the Offertory is inseparable from its ultimate sacrificial purpose and is conceived as a prerequisite for Communion. The sacrifice appears as a central jewel set between these two elements.

> "We go to the altar to present bread and wine to the celebrant; the celebrant pronounces the Eucharist over them; we return to the altar to receive the consecrated gifts. The Offertory is not a preliminary or autonomous act: the Offertory, Consecration and Communion are moments linked within a single continuous action. "The scope of the Offertory," says Dom Capelle, "is no less vast than that of the entire Mass. "28

In the Cluniac customs, compiled by the monk Udalric in the second half of the 11th century, the distribution of the 'eulogies' is described, that is to say, the portion of the bread offered for the Mass that had not been consecrated: the hebdomadier on duty presides over the distribution of the portions, which takes place in the refectory. The monk kisses the hand of the priest who presents him with this form of communion, which he cannot receive unless he is fasting and has already received communion that same day. It goes without saying that he must have considered himself to be in a state of grace. This custom not only bears witness to a certain disaffection from communion, but also emphasises the sacred nature, albeit to a lesser degree, of the act of the offnde29.

The offertory chant, known as *the sacrificium* in the Mozarabic rite, generally draws its texts from the Psalter and rather rarely expresses the idea of offering – for example, Epiphany, Corpus Christi, Pentecost, Dedication e30 or All Souls' Day – : this was not necessary, as the act of the procession itself was more expressive than the words.

Regarding the nature of the sacrifice, it may be noted that the offering of wheat flour took on increasingly specific forms, emphasising its purity and preciousness. Initially referred to by the term *oblata*, the word *hostia* was soon used; this Latin term originally applied only to a living animal that was to be slaughtered: an interesting and new emphasis on the idea of sacrifice (31), which is also highlighted in the Roman Canon *(hostiam puram, sanctam, immaculatam)*.

The symbolism of water mixed with wine is evident: 'If anyone offers only wine, the blood of Christ is found to be without us; if it is only water, it is the people who are found to be without Christ. '32 Luther described this practice as inappropriate: he saw in it the pure work of God corrupted

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27Roman decision from 1848, cited in J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 2, p. 297, n. 136.

28A.G. MARTIMORT, *L'Eglise en prière*, pp. 367–369.

29H. LECLERCQ, art. 'Bread', col. 460.

30Cited by SAINT THOMAS, cf. IIIa, q. 83, a.4, c. 31AMALAIRE,

De Ecclesiasticis Officiis, *PL* 105, col. 990 b. 32SAINT CYPRIAN,

Epistle 63: ad Caecilium, *CSEL*, vol. 3, p. 711.

through human interve ne[33]. The Trinitarian formulas accompanying these actions are intrinsic to the notion of perfect sacrifice t[34].

The incensing of the offerings emphasises the worship due to God alone, on the occasion of what has just been brought forward. It also symbolises prayer and thus provides a visual and olfactory introduction to the great prayer that is to follow:

> 'The incensing of the altar is a symbolic offering of the Church's prayers, a reminder of the angel of the Apocalypse offering the prayers of the saints on the altar of heaven in a golden censer. The incensing of the bishop, the clergy and the people is a symbol of their participation in the aforementioned offering, in the sense that this offering is a blessing, a eulogy, which is bestowed upon them when they are incensed." [35]

Thanksgiving

Following in the footsteps of Judaism, Christian liturgy adopts the term *sacrificium laudis* (cf. Col 3: :16)[36]. This idea is also found in the Roman Canon, 'with the formula *oblatio rationabilis*: the sacrifice offered to the divinity "[37]. The proclamation of the mystery of God's love revealed in Christ's sacrifice is indeed itself a 'sacrifice of the lips' that culminates in the splendour of the Mass preface; it begins with *'Vere Dignum*', these two letters V and D giving rise in the manuscripts to entire pages of magnificent illuminations known *as 'Majestas* Domi' ni[38]. Generally, the following page featured, in striking contrast, an illumination of the letter T (from the beginning of the canon *Te igitur*), which places before the celebrant's eyes Christ humiliated on the Cross. 'Both mark the two dominant themes of the Eucharistic prayer; the first highlighted more specifically praise or thanksgiving; the second, the sacrifice. "[39] We must remember to what extent, in the Middle Ages, illumination—just like the chant or the cathedral sculptures—was not a more or less optional aesthetic addition: it forms an integral part of what it illustrates. Thus, ceremony, chant and various forms of ornamentation all contribute to the perfection of this praise: here, too, everything is sacrifice, in the sense of a precious offering made out of love. This idea is found in the wording of certain secret prayers, for example that of the Mass *of the Righteous* (Common of Confessors, Non-Pontifical I): *'Laudis tibi Domine, hostias immolamus.'* Saint

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33Cf. LUTHER, *Formula missae et communionis*, n. 16.

34Cf. G. SIMONS, *Le Sacrifice parfait*, p. 17.

35P. BATIFFOL, *Leçons sur la messe*, p. 156. Cf. IIIa, q.83, a.5, ad 2.

36See also *Pliny's Letter to Trajan*: it speaks of a 'hymn sung to Chrestos as to a god'.

37J. RATZINGER, *The Celebration of Faith*, p. 37.

38Cf. G. SIMONS, *The Perfect Sacrifice*, p. 177.

39G. SIMONS, *The Perfect Sacrifice*, p. 177.

Thomas provides, in Article 4 of Question 83, a remarkable synthesis of the entire Mass from the perspective of praise. It should be read in full as a supplement to this paragraph.

The West will readily retain the term ‘Eucharist’ to designate the central part of the Mass; the East uses the word ‘anaphora’, which brings the idea of oblation to the fore. At the heart of the canon, the *Gratias agens* of the institution narrative emphasises this idea. But this praise runs through the entire Mass, through the chant and the psalms from which it is drawn, particularly out[40]. The invitation to praise is made, for the celebrant, by raising the hands (cf. 1 Tim 2:18), a symbol of the lifting up of hearts. The text of the prefaces reviews specific aspects of the work of salvation, in relation to the mystery being celebrated. The Tridentine Missal is very concise in this regard: the prefaces of the ancient sacramentaries could be much more elaborate. “Hence, in the liturgy, a tendency towards simplicity and solemnity, which gives rise to a whole series of combinations, shifts and transitions. Although differing from one another, these abbreviated prefaces all converge equally on the angelic praise and, through it, lead to *the Sanctus*.” [41]

Then, apart from the diptychs and other interpolated prayers, everything very quickly focuses on the sacrificed Christ, the central act of the Mass. “The canon is a sanctuary into which now only the priest may enter. The sacred silence that reigns there corresponds to the holiness of this intimate domain, which remains forbidden to the people.” [42]

The laying on of hands demonstrates that the celebrating priest is one with the Holy Host e[43]. The Canon concludes with the Great Doxology, expressed in two parts: **Per quem haec omnia** and **Per ipsum**. The first encompasses all that has been offered and could serve as the standard conclusion to blessings of varying forms that emphasise the goodness of creation on[44]. The second returns to the fundamental role of all prayer, which is to bow the creature before its Creator, somewhat like the *Gloria Patri* at the end of the psalms. Any request, to be granted, must be introduced and concluded with praise. ‘The signs of the cross that accompany the words are not an exercise of
power to bless, but they clearly illustrate the remembrance of divine blessing. ”[45] Medieval symbolism will provide a wealth of explanations regarding the symbolism of the number of signs of the cross: the Trinity, the four cardinal points, the five wounds of Christ .[46]

Institution

40Cf. IIIa, q.83, a.4, c.: “The Psalms encompass, by way of praise, the entire content of Holy Scripture.”

41G. SIMONS, *The Perfect Sacrifice*, p. 154 ff.

42J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 8 ff.

43Commentators often draw a parallel with the scapegoat of Leviticus (16:20–23). Cf. G. SIMONS, *Le Sacrifice parfait*, p. 160.

44See the Mozarabic expansion of *the Missale mixtum*: *Quia tu haec omnia nobis in dignis servis tuis valde bona creas, sanctificas, etc.* (*PL* 85, col. 554a).

45J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 192 ff. Cf. IIIa, q.83, a.5, ad 3.

46Cf. J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 192 ff.

The centre of the Eucharistic action, in almost all liturgies, is constituted by the account of the Last Supper; but it is rather surprising that the texts never simply reproduce those of Scripture. They may therefore be older than the composition of the Gospel. These texts evolve in three ways: the two parts concerning the bread and the wine take on an increasingly symmetrical form, a feature present from the very beginning (. [47]); later, there is a move to adhere more closely to the scriptural wording; and finally, there is a concern for a more ornate formulation to better convey the respect due to the mystery. The Roman text particularly expands the formula of consecration of the chalice. These 'deviations' from Scripture already make it clear, at the level of the text, that the Mass is not a mere imitation, but a celebration, a re-presentation. "The narrative is pronounced over the bread and the chalice and, by virtue of the Lord's command, is itself ordered to the prescribed repetition. Moreover, the essential rite of this repetition is this narrative. ' "[48] The creative Word here reaches the height of its efficacy; it becomes action. This is why the priest reproduces the Lord's gestures in a dramatic imitation, which does not exactly follow the logical order of the text: the *Gratias agens*, emphasised by a bow, has in essence already taken place; the *Fregit* will only be enacted before Communion; the *Benedixit* receives a recent Christian interpretation, a sign of the cross. But such language makes it clear that Christ himself enters into actio [on 49]. It is evident that the two separate consecrations, which follow the double Offertory, symbolically mark death: the body is separated from the blood. Yet it is not the broken host that is shown to the people, as the text would require, but a whole host, for it is Christ in glory who will be given in communion. The holy lance of the Eastern rites takes the allegory even further.

It was only after the year 1000 that gestures of veneration appeared which brought awareness of the event and drew ritual consequences from it: elevation, joined fingers, arms outstretched in the form of a cross, the consecration candle, the ringing of bells, and the kneeling of the congregation. From the idea of Christ's sacrifice as such, there was a gradual shift towards an emphasis on the Real Presence. The priest himself takes part in these marks of honour through genuflections, and sometimes by kissing the altar and the host. The ministers kneel early on and lift the hem of the chasuble, focusing attention on Christ offering himself to his Father. 'If, through the elevation and display of the Holy Species, the great stream of prayer and offering that rose straight up to God alone has been interrupted, this interruption has at least taken on a very full meaning thanks to its hymns – *O Salutaris, Ave Verum, O Sacrum Convivium* – which give the worship of the Holy Species its expression

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47In Hippolytus and Serapion, and also in the anaphorae of Saint Mark and Saint Basil. *See* J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 112.

48J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 118. The words added to the biblical narrative are 'to prepare the people taking part in it', IIIa, q.83, a.4, ad 1.

49Cf. St. AMBROSE, *De Mysteriis* 9,52 (*SC* 25 (1950) p.125.

and the appropriate richness." [50] We thus instinctively find here the *Sacrificium laudis* mentioned previously.

The solemn elevation is addressed specifically to those present: it is an act of faith in the mystery. One might see another meaning in it: "Why should we not raise Him (the Holy Victim) with the intention of allowing Him to offer Himself, placed there before His Father as the supreme homage of adoration to settle our debt? "[51] The gesture is clearly sacrificial, as is generally emphasised in the allegorical commentary of St Thomas, q.83, a.5, ad 3.

Breaking and Communion

There are sacrifices that do not require the participation of those present, except in intention. But generally, the normal outcome is participation through eating: the gifts are for those receiving Communion. When Christ breaks the bread (*fregit*) at the Last Supper, he repeats the gesture of the head of the household mentioned, incidentally, in the Gospel account of the multiplication of the loaves. Similarly, the rite of the *mixtio* has very humble and domestic origins: the Jews' unleavened bread was hard, so it was dipped (*cf.* the morsel given to Judas, Jn 13:26). The hosts brought to the offertory were often large – this varied according to the era and the rites – and appropriate symbolism was attached to them through which the *communio sanctorum* realised by the sacramental *sacra communio* is manifested – *cf.* 1 Cor 10:16–17 and *Didache* 9,[452]. Saint Augustine, for example, frequently intertwines the themes of the 'Eucharistic body' and the 'ecclesial body': 'If, then, you are the Body of Christ and his members, it is your own symbol that lies on the Lord's table; it is your own symbol that you receive. Be what you see and receive what you are. '[53]. Through Christ's sacrifice, the people gathered in the Church can themselves become Eucharistic sacrifices: "Christ is both the one who offers and the gift offered. He willed that the sacrament of this reality should be the daily sacrifice of the Church, which, being the body of this Head, learns to offer itself through him. [54] In the Gospel, the account of the Last Supper emphasises its nature as a meal: communion was indispensable there. But 'in the early Church, the offering of the sacrifice is obviously not a mere prelude to the sacred meal; but it is a first step, immediately followed by the second, the meal itself; or rather, the two acts form such a unity that taking part in one without taking part in the other seems at first unthinkable." [55] There is therefore a kind of "theological shift" from the meal to the sacrifice.

50J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 134.

51G. SIMONS, *The Perfect Sacrifice*, p. 92.

52Didache 9:4: this text sees in the bread itself a symbol of unity through the grains of wheat of which it is made.

53Sermon 272 (*PL* 38).

54De Civitate Dei 10.20.

55J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 198.

The *Lord's Prayer* is the quintessential prayer of communion, the first part of which is like a summary of the Eucharistic Prayer: *'Sanctificetur'* echoes the threefold acclamation of *the 'Sanctus'*; *'Adveniat Regnum tuum'* roughly summarises the *'Quam oblationem'* and the *'Supplices'*; *'Fiat voluntas tua'* expresses the obedience and self-giving from which all true sacrifice springs. The mystagogical catecheses of both East and West emphasise the sacramental meaning of *Panem nostrum* .[56]. Another petition highlighted by the Fathers is that which implores forgiveness of sins: for St Augustine, it is like washing one's face before approaching the alt .[157]. For him, this petition possesses a power that is almost absolving. People would strike their breasts whilst saying *'Dimitte nobis*'.

The *Lord's Prayer* features in almost all liturgies as the principal preparatory prayer for communion, even outside Mass, for example at the Mass of the Presanctified, which is nothing other than a solemnised communion, and for communion to the sick. It was recited only with a kind of sacred awe, as attested by the *Audemus* of the introduction; it was taught to catechumens only at the end of their preparation for baptism.

The rite of the breaking of the Host is always linked to that of the mixing. In the breaking of the Host, we saw—admittedly rather late—the symbol of Christ's death: here we find the ceremonial rendering of the words of institution. However, when the priest takes the Holy Host again before receiving Communion, he will bring the two halves together to reconstitute it, thereby signifying that he is receiving Communion with the glorious Christ, as we have already noted. We find three reasons for the breaking and distribution of the pieces: to provide for the communion of the faithful, to set aside a portion to ensure the Real Presence at the altar, and to manifest the unity of the Eucharistic sacrifice across time and space (the use of *the fermentum,* which attests to the unity of the Body of Christ from one Mass to another and between Masses when the Pope sends a portion of the consecrated Host to other places of worship in the city of Rome). In Amalarius, these three fragments have a symbolic interpretation:

> 'The fragment mingled with the Precious Blood represents the risen body of the Lord; the portion for the celebrant, his living Body in this world, the earthly Church; that for the sick, his Body lying in the tombs. This theory of *the* three-fold *Corpus Christi* recurs constantly in the centuries that followed. It also underwent changes: the three fragments were associated with the three states of the Church—the Church militant, the Church triumphant and the Church suffering. "[58]

But the essence of what remains of the complex rites of *the* ancient *Ordines Romani* is expressed in the accompanying formula: *Commixtio et consecratio corporis et sanguinis*, which may

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56Cf. ST. AMBROSE, *De Sacramentis* V, 4,24; ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Mystagogical Catecheses* V, 11–18.

57Sermon 17,5 (*PL* 38, col. 127).

58Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Corpus mysticum*, p. 295 ff.; the same idea is found in St Thomas, III a, q.83, a.5, ad7.

This can be translated as: the mingling of body and blood is the 'sanctification' thus brought about. The commingling is here unambiguously characterised as the rite that unifies, sanctifies and completes: the aim is to reveal in both species the single sacramental presence of Christ. The culmination of the sacrifice is therefore the sanctification and unity of the ecclesial Body: an essential theological articulation.

The breaking of the bread is accompanied by the chant known in the ancient books as *the Confractorium*: this is *the Agnus Dei*, the introduction of which to Rome is generally attributed to Pope Sergius I, a Syrian by origin. Its symbolism is extraordinarily rich, deriving from Holy Scripture (Ex 12, 1 Cor 5, etc.): images of sacrifice, passion, banquet and resurrection, and a connection with the figure of the Good Shepherd. It is under this figure that the Forerunner designates the Messiah (Jn 1:29 ff.). The Book of Revelation shows us the victorious Lamb and his wedding feast (Rev 5–6).

For a long time, the Eucharistic species were referred to in the East as *the 'Lamb'*, the most common victim in the sacrifices of antiquity. Among the Latin Fathers, the more general term *'hostia'* corresponds to this. The liturgy of Holy Thursday still retains the original form of this triple invocation, ending identically with *'Miserere nobis*'. It was the proximity of the rite of peace that led to the third invocation being changed to *'Dona nobis pacem*'. It even came to be regarded in its entirety as a prayer for peace, both external and internal in the souls. The closing words of the Mass for the dead, *Dona eis requiem*, have been known since the 11th century. In the Carthusian rite, the second and third *Agnus Dei* are postponed until after Communion: it then takes on the character of a Communion hymn. Just like the *Kyrie*, it underwent highly ornate developments in the Middle Ages , p. 59.

The sign of peace, in the Roman Mass and in Africa, is placed just before Communion, whereas in Milan and in the ancient Christian mindset, its place was rather at the end of the Mass of the Catechumens as a final seal set upon the prayer (cf. Mt 5:23 ff.). Many rites have long maintained the link between the kiss of peace and Communion, even in private Masses (, e60). It sometimes becomes a substitute, like the eulogies (, s61), and is then regarded as a kind of gift. The source of this is the Holy Sacrifice itself, with the kissing of the altar, the rim of the chalice, the corporal, the missal or the paten. It manifests charity within the Church, in connection with the petition in *the Lord's Prayer* concerning the forgiveness of offences, and is transmitted in a strictly hierarchical manner.

The three prayers recited by the priest before Communion reflect the prevailing attitude of the Middle Ages towards the sacrament: less concerned with carefully preparing the soul for it than with obtaining from God the full effect of *the opus operatum*. A whole theology is contained, for example, in the *Domine Jesu Christe* prayer, which brings together the great themes of Christian anamnesis: the

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59Cf. J.A. JUNGMAN: *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 269, n. 50.

60For example, *Rituale cisterciense,* Paris, 1689, p. 93.

61J. Beleth cites three rites introduced to replace daily communion: on weekdays the kiss of peace, on Sundays the blessed bread, and during Lent *the oratio super populum*. *Cf. Explicatio*, chap. 48 (*PL* 202, col. 55 d).

the merciful plan of the Father, the obedient death of the Son, the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, to ask for deliverance from sin, final perseverance and transforming union. This is further developed in many post-communion prayers. The prayer *Domine qui dixisti* highlights the effect of the sacrament of which St Augustine spoke: *Pacificare et coadunare*, which relates to the unity of the Church. The second prayer highlights the event of the Cross and the sacrifice: *Mortem et resurrectionem.* The third speaks of the reception *of the Body*: *Perceptio corporis.* The two formulas accompanying the priest's communion interweave the same ideas: *Panem coelestem accipiam* (this refers to the meal) *and nomen Domini invocabo* (here we find the *sacrificium laudis*). Similarly, the other formula for the chalice: *Quid retribuam Domino calicem salutaris accipiam* (meal) *and nomem Domini* (*sacrificium laudis*). We can therefore see very clearly here that the *sacrificium laudis* is the key concept that bridges the gap between *the sacrificium* and *the meal*.

The ritual of the priest's communion is strikingly simple: the prior genuflection dates only from the late Middle Ages, as do the signs of the cross accompanying the *sumptio corporis et sanguinis*. Psalm 115:3 is a discreet hymn of praise applied to the very act of communion, as is Psalm 17:4. The centurion's confession only found its place at a later date, as did the practice of striking the breast. The vocative *Domine* is addressed more to the Lamb, to whom the adoration of all creatures is due (*cf.* the end of the litanies: *Agnus Dei because nobis Domine*). 'We change the meaning of the petition; on our lips, its object is no longer the word that would take the place of his coming, but the word that prepares us for it. " "[62]

From around the 12th century onwards, the faithful began to make a public confession, that is to say, they recited the *Confiteor* together, sometimes even in the vernacular. The place where the faithful received Communion varied over the centuries. In the *Ordines Romani*, the faithful remain in their places and Communion is brought to them by the clergy, which means that all those present receive Communion; otherwise, they withdraw. In the 6th century in Rome, the deacon gave the following warning: *'Si quis non communicat, det locum' (. 63*). In the East and especially in Gaul, the doors of the sanctuary were opened and the faithful ascended the steps to the altar. Later, Communion was administered at the rood screen, which was gradually supplemented by a fixed wooden or stone partition covered with a cloth, low enough for one to kneel before it – from around the 11th century onwards. When we speak of the Lord's table, we are referring more to the altar than to the communion table. The gestures of veneration, prior to receiving the sacrament, vary but have remained constant since the early days of the Church: genuflection, bare feet, kissing the ground or the priest's foot, a white veil for nuns or a distinctive habit. A keener awareness of the sanctity of the sacrament and the precautions to be taken for its distribution led to a shift in practice towards communion on the tongue, which frees both communicants and the celebrant from unnecessary concerns. The Latin rite, from the 12th

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62J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 288.

63J.A. JUNGMAN, *Missarum solemnia*, vol. 3, p. 270.

century at the very least, has known only Communion under one species. This clearly illustrates the clarification of the dogma: it is not a figurative rite which, if divided into two, would lose all meaning; it is the reception of the glorious Christ, who manifests that his Body and Blood are no longer separate , s64. To the objection that the symbolism of the bloody death is not respected when one receives Communion under one species, St Thomas replies that since food and drink are ordered to a single refreshment, the sacrament of the Eucharist is materially multiple (bread and wine), but formally and ultimately one (spiritual refreshment)65. Moreover, from the very beginnings of the Church, Communion to the sick was administered under a single species.

After Communion, the priest performs two final rites: taking care of what remains of the Communion and purifying everything used in its distribution. It has always been essential to preserve the Blessed Sacrament, because, in many cases, it was impossible to foresee the number of communicants and also for the Communion of the sick. The Tridentine Missal, by instructing the priest *to 'Se purificat'* 66, actually refers to *the 'ablutio oris'*, which is its oldest form. The rite of priestly ordination has even retained it for others besides the celebrant, a practice that existed in medieval monasteries s67. In the Middle Ages, ablutions were always performed with wine, considered an antiseptic, but also in keeping with the very logic of the Eucharistic rites. This water was usually poured into the piscina. Everything concludes with an invitation to give thanks, the final stage of *the sacrificium laudis*.

Conclusion

Sacrifice and meal: some have sought to see in this an irreconcilable contradiction. The pendulum swing of the history of theology is evident here as elsewhere. Whilst it is indeed clear that the setting of the Passover meal, within which the Last Supper was embedded, was for the early Christians the most external expression of the mystery—the formal envelope of a more inner reality—it is no less clear that the awareness of the primacy of sacrifice has deep roots in Tradition. Since the Reformation, the rejection of this notion of sacrifice has led to the development of treatises that are almost entirely separate from *the sacrificium* miss ae68. As is often the case in Christianity, the opposition is only apparent and resolves itself into a higher form of complementarity. If sacrifice is the renunciation of something of oneself to manifest the excellence of a higher good,

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64Cf. C. JOURNET, *La Messe*, p. 274 ff.

65IIa, q. 73, a. 2.

66Ritus servandus 10,5.

67Liber usuum de Citeaux, chap. 58 (*PL* 166, col. 1432).

68In his treatise *De Captivitate babylonica Ecclesiae*, written in 1520, Luther describes the sacrifice of the Mass as one of his Babylonian abominations. Catholic theologians would therefore respond, more or less consciously, to these attacks.

And if Christ himself, in the supreme gift of the Cross, is at once altar, priest and host, manifesting the most complete self-emptying for the most perfect Love, what remains of the meal—equally and duly symbolised and spiritualised—evokes another gift, that of shared charity. For in faith, there exists between two strangers who find themselves side by side at the holy table and receive the glorious Christ in the manner that gives him glory, an intimacy and closeness greater and more perfect than those arising from the bonds of blood or marriage.

It was therefore necessary to express, on the one hand, the absolute transcendence that is the source of unity, and, on the other, the communion of saints that flows from it and is its fruit. The language and rites move ceaselessly from one to the other, united in perfect praise through words and a life pleasing to God. The countless signs of respect, the Trinitarian imprint of so many formulas and gestures, and the precious materials used are thus complemented by the common movements, strictly hierarchical in order; the perfection of the singing, which is a joint endeavour not only of voices but also of hearts; and the place and role of each person, from the pontiff down to the last of the faithful. The order of a meal, even a secular one, always involves a certain symbolic dimension that is unique to human beings; when it comes to a religious meal, this dimension can only be reinforced, and when it comes to the Lord's Supper, it is natural that we should transcend the highest human realities to reach the divine.

> 'For the practice of communion with the Lord's Body, we must rely on precise words. Let us not base our devotion on words that are misleading and which, for that reason, are never explored in depth. Piety cannot be both imprecise and strong. Our Lord designated Holy Communion as "food"; this word, divinely chosen, avoids any reference to our sensations. On the other hand, how could words that do not stand up to reflection instruct me, or engage me? 'Meal, Eucharistic banquet'. Alas! All is lost, both the rigour of Revelation and the meaning of the most divine Sacrament.
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> 'A "banquet"? Alas, what are you putting into my mind! "The service will be long; we'll be obliged to try every dish; there will be speeches; we don't know what time we'll leave. Thank goodness it doesn't happen often!" Is that really it? A banquet is a thing of this world, and for this world.
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> "We also say: Grant that we may possess, Lord Jesus, the eternal enjoyment of the divinity; for here on earth we have a foretaste of it 'when we receive your Body and Blood' (Mass of the Blessed Sacrament, after Communion).
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> 'The eternal enjoyment of the divinity' is correct; but not: 'a foretaste here on earth'. Our Lord never said that; Communion is a promise of eternal life, not a foretaste. For the faithful who wish to be attentive, what a difference there is between the exact word

and the one that is not! The first of these words sustains the faithful in their faith; does not the second disappoint them? Such remarks are therefore more positive than they appear. For the practice of Holy Communion is a long-term undertaking, perhaps fragile, in any case exceptionally serious.

'Communion is not a meal, since the believer receives only a morsel. However, the word "meal" can be salvaged by saying that it evokes the sum total of communions received throughout a lifetime. In this sense, the importance of continuity is emphasised, which is correct. For it is the regular reception of Holy Communion that fulfils the Lord's intention. It is assiduity that counts." [69]

One can only unite oneself interiorly with Christ's sacrifice through assimilation. And this is achieved, in the most complete way, through the external element of eating: here we are within the logic of the Incarnation, with all its consequences—the transparency of the divine in the human, the epiphany of God through created elements. Since God is Spirit and man is incarnate, the most spiritual sacrifice is expressed in natural and sensible signs, such as those of the meal. Only Christ, both man and God, perfectly unites these two realities.

'The liturgical banquet is a sacrifice to which God responds by transforming our offering into a gift. The consecration of the bread and wine, which become the body and blood of Christ, gives the representation of Jesus' historical sacrifice a mysteriously real meaning. When Christ becomes present under the sensible species, he descends from heavenly glory to the earth where he lived. The transfigured Paschal Lamb of the cross comes to the altar; his presence transforms the Upper Room into Calvary. The symbol of this is the cross raised on the altar table. "[70]

69FATHER JÉRÔME, *Car toujours dure longtemps*, Paris, 1986, pp. 135–136.

70T. SCHNITZLER, *Les Paroles de la Messe*, pp. 14–15.