

LITURGY AND CATECHESIS

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Liturgy and catechesis – this theme has taken on new significance with what is known as the liturgical renewal, particularly as the liturgy can now be interrupted on several occasions by ‘liturgical instruction’. What is the relationship between liturgy and catechesis? Should the liturgy itself be catechetical? Is the liturgy true to its purpose when it becomes catechesis? What place should the liturgy occupy within the framework of catechetical teaching? Can the liturgy be communicated in a catechetical form?

In an attempt to provide a meaningful answer to these and many other questions, I shall begin by offering some reflections on the essence of the liturgy and catechesis, as well as on their mutual relationship. In a second stage, I shall present certain aspects of the transmission of the faith in the liturgy and in catechesis. We shall then consider how this transmission of the faith takes place within the traditional Tridentine Roman liturgy, whether in the image it presented of the priest, in the unity of the Word, or in the action and form of the rite; to this end, we shall draw upon a number of liturgical texts and the constituent elements of the Roman Canon and its doctrine. Finally, we shall outline some reflections on the catechetical introduction to the liturgy: we shall begin by studying the way in which the liturgy is presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, this presentation being regarded as the framework for catechetical instruction; we shall then attempt to show, taking the Mass as the actualisation of the sacrifice of the Cross, what a catechetical introduction to the liturgy might look like for young people.

1. The liturgy – a form of catechesis?

1. The essence of the liturgy: the work of God and the Church

What is meant by ‘liturgy’? According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ‘the word “liturgy” originally means “public work”, “service on behalf of or for the people”. In the Christian tradition, it signifies that the people of God take part in ‘the work of God’. Through the liturgy, Christ, our Redeemer and High Priest, continues in his Church, with her and through her, the work of our redemption’ (1069).

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The Second Vatican Council's constitution **Sacrosanctum Concilium** also brings together these two aspects of the liturgy: the work of God and the work of the Church: 'It is therefore rightly considered that the liturgy is the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, an exercise in which the sanctification of humankind is signified by sensible signs and brought about in a manner proper to each of them, and in which public and integral worship is exercised by the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is to say, by the Head and by his members. Consequently, every liturgical celebration, as the work of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is the sacred action par excellence, the efficacy of which no other action of the Church can match in the same way or to the same degree' (SC 7).

Finally, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 'the liturgy is also a participation in the prayer of Christ, addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit' (no. 1073). This is why, moreover, the 'Liturgy of the Hours' and 'liturgical prayer' are also part of the liturgy.

Given that, at present, the 'liturgy' is often regarded primarily as a work of human hands, it is essential to emphasise that it is *first and foremost* the work of God. Cardinal Ratzinger therefore never ceases to reiterate that the liturgy is not something created by human beings but a participation in the heavenly liturgy: 'Thus the earthly liturgy is, and is only, liturgy because it penetrates into what is already taking place, into that which is greater than itself'.² – in this instance, more precisely, the heavenly liturgy. In this sense, Cardinal Ratzinger can also state:

If heaven is not open, what was once liturgy ends up being reduced to a role-play, to the ultimately meaningless quest for communal self-affirmation in which, fundamentally, nothing happens [...] The liturgy is either the work of God or it is not; by virtue of this absolute primacy given to God and his work [...] every liturgy is universal; it has a 'public and integral' character and cannot be understood in terms of the category of 'congregation' (*Gemeinde*)³ but only in terms of the categories of 'People of God' and 'Body of Christ'.⁴

All these reflections concern not only the Holy Mass but also all liturgical acts, and therefore in particular the administration of the sacraments or the 'Liturgy of the Hours' (Breviary). That said, in this document, when we speak of 'liturgy', we will be

² *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ad Solem, Geneva.

³ "It should be noted here that the term 'community' – which originated in the Reformed tradition – cannot be translated into most languages. In the Romance languages, its equivalent is 'assembly', but this term carries a slightly different nuance" (*ibid.*, p. 172).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

essentially a question of the sacrifice of the Mass, and it is always within this framework that we shall address the theme of ‘liturgy and catechesis’.

Since we have chosen to study the Mass as the heart of the liturgy, this implies that we must regard ‘sacrifice’ and ‘worship’ as belonging to the very essence of the liturgy. In his book **Der Geist der Liturgie**,⁵ Cardinal Ratzinger points out that it has all too often been mistakenly assumed that ‘sacrifice’ was nothing but something negative, namely the destruction of something. It would be more accurate to say:

The true transfer of ownership to God [...] consists [...] in the union of humankind and creation with God. There is nothing in common between belonging to God and destruction or non-existence; belonging to God is, on the contrary, a way of being: it is to emerge from the state of separation, from apparent autonomy; it is no longer to be for oneself and in oneself; to belong to God is to renounce oneself, which is the only way to find oneself (cf. Mk 8:35; Mt 10:39).⁶

The aim of the liturgy and of the sacrifice performed within it is therefore the deification of humankind and the world – a work whose origin can only lie in God and into which humankind must, in a sense, enter in order to be saved. Fundamentally, it is Christ himself who, first and foremost, offers the sacrifice. We, as human beings, can only participate in this in a second stage.

1.2 *The essence of catechesis: the communication of the faith by the Church*

‘Catechesis’ is, first and foremost, the transmission of the faith.⁷ In this regard, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter **Catechesi tradendae** (1979): ‘Catechesis is an education in the faith addressed to children, adolescents and adults, and consists essentially of a presentation of Christian doctrine, generally set out in an organic and systematic manner, to introduce those who are learning it to the fullness of Christian life’ (CT 18).

In this sense, ‘catechesis’ is a task that should accompany the faithful throughout their lives. The *General Directory for Catechesis*, published in 1997 by the Congregation for the Clergy, sets out the four fundamental components of catechesis, which correspond to

⁵ Fribourg 2000.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷ Cf. CCC 4–10.

which, moreover, are in line with the teachings of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the entire catechetical tradition: developing the faith, introducing people to the liturgy, providing moral formation and

teaching how to pray properly.⁸ To these four tasks, the directory adds two further ones: that of

‘education in community life’ (including the ecumenical dimension) and

‘an introduction to mission’ (including inter-religious dialogue).⁹

‘Liturgical education’, which is of primary interest to us here, is not presented as consisting simply of teaching the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments; it must also lead ‘to prayer, to thanksgiving, to contrition, to confident supplication, to a sense of community, and to an understanding of symbolic language’.¹⁰

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the heart of catechesis is Christ. It therefore quotes our Pope (CCC 426):

At the heart of catechesis we find, above all, a Person: Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son of the Father [...], who suffered and died for us and who now, having risen from the dead, lives with us for ever [...] To catechise [...], is to reveal, in the Person of Christ, the whole of God’s eternal plan. It means seeking to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words, of the signs he performed. ‘¹¹

The *Catechism* then goes on to quote the Pope again (CCC 427):

In catechesis, it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught – everything else is taught in relation to Him; and Christ alone teaches; everyone else does so only insofar as they are His spokespeople, enabling Christ to teach through their words [...]. Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: ‘My teaching is not my own, but comes from the One who sent me’ (Jn 7:16) (CT 6).

We can therefore see that the term ‘catechesis’ is a twofold concept: it appears to us first and foremost as the work of man or, more precisely, of the Church. But, fundamentally, it is Christ Himself who must be at work in catechesis. And this brings us to a central problem of catechesis today. All too often, people complain that it

⁸ *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 85.

⁹ *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 86.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, no. 85; this quotation is taken from the 1971 *Allgemeines Katechetisches Direktorium*, no. 25b

¹¹ CT 5.

is fruitless; but might this not be due to the fact that, unfortunately, too many people teach ‘in their own name’¹² rather than teaching in the name of the One who sent them?

1.3 *The Relationship between Liturgy and Catechesis – Their Respective Spheres and Mutual Enrichment*

Let us now consider the relationship between liturgy and catechesis. Firstly, it is clear that we are dealing here with two distinct dimensions. A ‘liturgy’ worthy of the name is, first and foremost, ‘the work of God’; it is only secondarily the work of man. Its proper place is the altar. As for catechesis, it is the transmission of the faith, teaching and therefore, fundamentally, the work of man. Its proper place is the pulpit.

The current liturgy has excessively expanded the ‘liturgical instruction’ within the Mass. * * ¹³ It is true that, in justifying the retention of the ancient liturgical language of Latin, the Council of Trent itself had stated:

‘Although the Mass contains great instruction for the faithful, it did not seem right to the Fathers that it should be celebrated here and there in the vernacular’, that Council nonetheless prescribed: ‘The holy Council enjoins pastors and all those entrusted with the care of souls to provide frequent explanations, during the celebration of Masses, either themselves or through others, based on the texts read at Mass, and, amongst other things, to elucidate the mystery of this sacrifice, especially on Sundays and feast days’.¹⁴

This certainly refers to preaching. However, in addition to the homily, the ‘new liturgy’ provides four further opportunities for the priest to offer ‘catechesis’: at the beginning of the day’s Mass (a general introduction), before the reading (an introduction to the Liturgy of the Word), before the Preface (an introduction to the Canon) and, finally, a few words before the congregation is dismissed. These catechetical interventions, together with the many opportunities for improvisation during Mass¹⁵, allow us to assert that the ‘new liturgy’ is a ‘catechetical liturgy’, whereas the Tridentine Roman liturgy

¹² Cf. Jn 7:18.

¹³ On the following points, cf. Walter LANG: ‘Die Korrekte Zelebration des “Novus Ordo” – worauf Katholiken bestehen können (unter Berücksichtigung der *Institutio generalis 2000*)’, issue no. 3 of the series: *Pro Sancta Ecclesia – Initiative katholischer Laien und Priester e.V.*, Munich 2000.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5, note 10: Council of Trent, 22nd session, chap. 8 (DS 1749), and chap. 9 (DS 1759).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13: Opportunities for improvisation as a priest: the homily (the sermon), the Kyrie, the prayers; as presider: the *monitiones* when inviting the faithful to examine their consciences, before the prayer over the offerings, as an introduction to *the Lord’s Prayer*, before the prayer for peace, and when inviting the faithful to exchange a sign of peace.

The traditional liturgy is a ‘mystery liturgy’, in which catechesis does not form part of the liturgy in the strict sense.

Nevertheless, in both rites, there is a connection between ‘liturgy’ and ‘catechesis’. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* even states that the liturgy is ‘the of choice for the catechesis of the People of God’.¹⁶ And it quotes once again the Pope’s on catechesis: ‘Catechesis is intrinsically linked to the whole of liturgical and sacramental action, for it is in the sacraments, and above all in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus acts in fullness for the transformation of humankind’.¹⁷

But what is meant when it is stated that the liturgy is ‘the privileged place for the catechesis of the People of God’? Does this mean that the People of God are catechised by the liturgy? Or simply that the privileged place for catechesis lies within the context of the liturgy of the Mass, specifically in the homily? If we consider the ‘renewed liturgy’, we must admit that this rite is indeed intended to be catechetical. However, on reading what the Pope said, one must rather consider that catechesis – as indeed the whole tradition holds – must take into account the entire liturgical and sacramental action, because it is there that Jesus Christ is truly and authentically at work.

Of course, one could also say that, through his sacramental work, Christ acts in a ‘catechetical’ manner in the Eucharist. In addition to this ‘catechetical’ action of Christ, there is the

‘liturgical catechesis of the Church’, which is a ‘mystagogy’, and which ‘aims to introduce people to the mystery of Christ, proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the signifier to the signified, from the “sacraments” to the “mysteries”’.¹⁸ We can therefore say that, from Christ’s perspective, the liturgy truly and essentially transmits the faith, and that, from the Church’s perspective, this rite is designed to lead the faithful to the faith. The liturgy is a means of transmitting the faith and, in this sense, it is ‘catechetical’; as for catechesis, one of its main objectives is to introduce people to the celebration of Holy Mass.

2. The transmission of the faith in the liturgy and in catechesis

I believe the above considerations have enabled us to define the framework within which we can deepen our reflection on the transmission of the faith in the liturgy and in

¹⁶ CCC, no. 1074.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 1074, drawing on CT 23.

¹⁸ CCC, no. 1075.

catechesis. To begin with, we shall examine more closely how the faith is transmitted through the liturgy.

2.1 *God's work in the liturgy: Substantial transmission of the faith*

We know that it is Christ who truly acts in the liturgy. He is both victim and priest. On the Cross and at the altar, we have 'one and the same victim and one and the same priest',¹⁹ as the Council of Trent states. This action of Christ relates first and foremost to the sacrificial act (the consecration); it continues in Holy Communion, but it must also be extended to the Liturgy of the Word (or Introduction), in which the 'Word of God' has its place.

However, speaking of the actualisation of the sacrifice of the Cross does not simply mean that this event is made present on the altar; it also means that we are granted what Christ has acquired for us through his death on the Cross. Traditionally, it is customary to speak here of the gift of the 'fruits of the sacrifice'. These fruits of the redemptive sacrifice are: 1. the general fruits of the Mass, which are granted, irrespective of the celebrant's intention, to the whole Church, to the living faithful and to the poor souls in Purgatory (see the ancient Offertory prayers); 2. the particular fruits of the Mass, which are granted to those for whom the Mass is specifically celebrated, whether living or dead (see the prayers of the Canon before and after the Consecration); the attainment of these fruits should not be regarded as a right to which man is entitled, but as something to be sought; and 3. the personal fruits of the Mass, which are granted to the celebrant and to all those who participate in the sacrifice.²⁰

2.2 *The Rite: Man's Response – Doctrinal Presentation of the Faith (word, action and form of the rite)*

When we speak of the 'transmission of the faith' in the liturgy, this also includes man's response to God's action. As regards the sacrifice of the Mass, Christ has in fact provided only the essential core of this celebration. The external form – the rite – was created by the Church: as we have seen, the Church intends, through these external forms, 'to introduce [the faithful] into the mystery of Christ, proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the signifier to the signified, from the 'sacraments' to the 'mysteries'.'²¹ Let us consider

¹⁹ Council of Trent; quoted here from Anselm SCHOTT OSB: **Das vollständige Römische Meßbuch**, Fribourg 1941, p. 1*.

²⁰ Cf. OTT: *op. cit.*, pp. 491–492.

²¹ CCC, no. 1075.

For example, the words spoken, the hymns and music, the various postures (kneeling, sitting, standing, hands clasped, the posture of one at prayer), the kissing of the altar and the sign of peace, the signs of the cross, genuflections, the greeting: ‘The Lord be with you!’ addressed to the faithful, and many other things besides – all these signs and gestures are intended to lead from the visible to the invisible.

2.3 *Liturgical catechesis – Understanding the rite and living in accordance with the spirit of the liturgy*

As we have said, catechesis aims to pass on the faith. When it introduces people to the liturgy, it can do so in a concrete and obvious way.

Firstly, when we consider the liturgy, we can discover what is most important in life: to glorify God and to worship him! Do not the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius begin with these words: ‘Man is created to praise, revere and fear God, and thereby save his soul’?

Secondly, this objective theocentric attitude that characterises the liturgy is at the same time inseparable from the communal dimension. In 1933, in the Introduction to his **Year of Salvation** * * *,²² Pius Parsch, one of the leading figures of the liturgical movement in Austria in the first half of the 20th century, clarified and emphasised just how important it was to move from a purely subjective and self-centred disposition to a form of devotion that is rooted in the community and of which the liturgy is the model.

For Pius Parsch, an ‘authentically liturgical life’ must be founded on three pillars: ‘Divine Life, the Eucharist and the Church’.²³ Regarding the Church, he wrote:

We must rediscover that the Church is our Mother, that she is the Mystical Body of Christ, the holy and immaculate Bride. We present ourselves before God not as autonomous individuals, unconnected to others, but in the communion of the holy Church. I am but a poor sinner, yet as a member of the Church, I am holy and immaculate. That is why I seek communion in all my liturgical actions, in prayer, in sacrifice, and in life. Thus, the communion of saints becomes for me an important article of faith – communion with those who dwell in heaven, communion amongst all Christians. Let us be careful not to isolate ourselves! *Vae soli!* (Woe to those who are alone!). In this age of individualism, it was believed that the individual was everything, and that the common good arose from the community,

²² *Ibid.*; cf. *Klosterneuburger Liturgiekalender für immerwährenden Gebrauch*, vol. 1. (Christmas Season), Klosterneuburg, 1933.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

that it was the community itself. The titans of the ‘superman’ thought they could build a tower that would reach the heavens: ‘You shall be like gods, distinguishing good from evil!’ The fruits of this diabolical seed were subjectivism, rationalism, nationalism, materialism [...] We must return to communion, to religious communion, to the communion of the people. There, much remains to be done to divert humanity from the temptation to withdraw into itself, to isolate itself from others, to dig rifts between itself and others, and to foster class pride. But, more specifically, the spirit of communion is of crucial importance to the liturgical way of life .²⁴

What strikes me as particularly interesting in these remarks is Pius Parsch’s almost boundless admiration for the communal dimension. I explored this issue in greater depth in an essay entitled: ‘From the “Mass of the Assembly” to the “Mass of the Community” – *A Path to the Beyond*’²⁵, in which I sought to understand why the shift from the ‘Mass of the Assembly’ to the ‘Mass of the Community’ has led to the problems we currently face with the liturgy. In my view, it is the excessive emphasis placed by the 20th-century ‘liturgical movement’ on the communal dimension that has led to a restrictive conception of the liturgy. The liturgy is not simply something determined by the assembly; it is also shaped by the individual – the priest who celebrates the Eucharist *in persona Christi* – as well as by each member of the faithful, who must individually participate in Christ’s offering of himself to the Father. In this sense, a ‘liturgical life’ must preserve both the communal and the individual dimensions.

3. The transmission of the faith in the traditional Tridentine Roman liturgy

Let us now consider the traditional Tridentine Roman liturgy to see what role ‘the community’ plays within it and how the transmission of the faith takes place there.

3.1 *The priest is ‘set apart’ – Distinction between the sacramental priesthood and the general priesthood*

What is most striking is that, for the priest, the Holy Mass is neither primarily nor exclusively a ‘liturgy of the community’. Unlike the ‘new liturgy’, in which the priest acts as ‘president’ of a celebration

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

²⁵ ‘ From the ‘Community Mass’ to the ‘Parish Mass’ – a path to the sidelines’, in: *Schriften der Initiativkreise* ..., no. 24.

and where, frequently, he acts alongside the faithful and with them, in the traditional liturgy the priest stands alone before God, just as Moses was called individually up the holy mountain, whilst the people were to remain at the foot of the mountain. Moreover, when the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: ‘It is the whole *community*, the Body of Christ united to its Head, which celebrates “ ”’,²⁶ it makes it clear: ‘But “not all the members have the same function” (Rom 12:4) ’²⁷. And, in the traditional liturgy, the first indication of this is that the priest does not approach an altar facing the people (‘the people’s altar’) to recite the *Confiteor* and a plea for forgiveness (‘Have mercy on us’) together with the people; on the contrary, at the foot of the altar—which occupies its own raised space—he confesses his sins to his ‘brothers’, receives their confession of their own sins, and then grants them forgiveness (‘May He have mercy *on* you’). All this clearly demonstrates that there is an essential difference between the general priesthood and the particular priesthood.

The priest’s ‘setting apart’ and his special position are rooted in Christ: for it is he alone who accomplished redemption once and for all. This was very clearly evident in the life of Padre Pio, the recently beatified Capuchin friar: in a sense ‘set apart’ by his stigmata, he re-enacted the sacrifice of the Cross day after day, alone at the altar. Padre Pio was so deeply imbued with Christ that he literally became an image of the Crucified One. Thus, one of his biographers was able to rightly observe: ‘Truly, at the altar, Padre Pio was for us the visible sign, the sacrament of Jesus crucified’.²⁸

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasises ‘the one priesthood of Christ’²⁹; it mentions ‘two forms of participation in the one priesthood of Christ’ (title of no. 1546): ‘the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful ’³⁰ which are ‘ordered to one another’ (LG 10) but which ‘nevertheless differ essentially’: ‘Whilst the common priesthood of the faithful is realised in the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope and charity, a life according to the Spirit—the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood; it relates to the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. It is one of *the means* by which Christ ceaselessly

²⁶ CCC, no. 1140.

²⁷ CCC, no. 1142.

²⁸ P. DEROBERT: *Pater Pio – durchsichtig auf Gott hin*, Hovine (Belgium) 1990, p. 737

²⁹ Before no. 1544.

³⁰ No. 1547.

to build up and lead his Church. That is why it is conferred through a specific sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders.’³¹

Whilst, in my view, the traditional Roman liturgy can be described as a ‘priestly liturgy’ and presents itself as such, the ‘new liturgy’ is rather a ‘communal liturgy’ and asserts itself as such.

3.2. *The priest acts in persona Christi*

We are familiar with the famous phrase from *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*: ‘The priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis* – in the person of Christ the Head’.³² This is a reality that John Paul II never ceases to emphasise and reiterate. Since 1979, in his Holy Thursday letters addressed to all bishops and priests, as well as in numerous audiences, he has ceaselessly reaffirmed the true essence of the Catholic priesthood. One might say that the Apostolic Letter on the formation of priests, **Pastores dabo vobis**, published on 25 March 1992, summarises everything he has said regarding the formation of priests in our time. In Chapter 2, the Pope speaks of ‘the essence and mission of the priesthood’ and recalls that ‘the contributions [of the Synod Fathers] have highlighted an awareness of the specifically ontological bond existing between the priest and Christ, the High Priest and Good Shepherd’.

In the traditional Mass, it is at the moment of consecration that this ‘ontological bond’ appears most clearly. At that moment, the priest does not remain rigid, as in the new liturgy; he does not speak aloud, he does not narrate, he does not tell a story; on the contrary, in saying that Christ took the bread, the priest takes the bread; when he says that Christ took the chalice, the priest takes the chalice; when he says that Christ raised his eyes to heaven, the priest too raises his eyes to heaven; when he says that Christ gave thanks, the priest briefly bows his head; then, like Christ, he blesses the bread by making the sign of the cross over it.

3.3 *Unity of word, action and form in the rite – The example of the ‘prayers at the foot of the altar’*

³¹ No. 1547.

³² No. 1548, with reference to *LG* 10; 28; *SC* 33; *CD* 11; *PO* 2; 6.

What the priest does at the moment of consecration is a good example of the multitude of signs and symbols contained in the traditional liturgy which are closely related to the words spoken.

This is also evident in the ‘prayers at the foot of the altar’; as we have said, these are recited at the foot of the steps leading up to the altar. This is not an ‘altar of the people’ around which the ‘community’ gathers, but an altar separated from the faithful, upon which the sacrifice due to God is to be offered – and thus an ‘altar of sacrifice’. Even though the priest acts *in persona Christi Capitis*, he is, first and foremost, a sinner who, like everyone else, is in need of divine mercy: this is why he too recites the *Confiteor*, but alone, bowing deeply, whereas in the ‘new liturgy’ he remains standing and recites it with the rest of the congregation. In the traditional liturgy, the priest first recites the prayer for forgiveness on behalf of his assistants or altar servers: ‘May Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive your sins and lead you to eternal life’, and only then does he ask for ‘indulgence, absolution and forgiveness’ of sins for everyone, including himself.

Already, the words: ‘*Introibo ad altare Dei*’ clearly showed that it is not ‘the people’ who are at the centre of the Mass, but God, a fact emphasised by the placement of the tabernacle in the centre of the altar. When, at last, the priest ascends to the altar, the prayer he then utters—‘Wash away our sins, O Lord, that we may enter your sanctuary with a pure soul’—clearly demonstrates, once again, the distinction between the space of the church and the space of the altar, between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. First and foremost, this ascent to the altar recalls Moses, who was called to ascend alone to the Holy Mountain, whilst the people were to remain below. Only the altar, the mystical Golgotha, allows us to clearly express the essence of the Holy Mass, namely the re-enactment of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross. By then kissing the altar, the priest first and foremost pays homage to Christ, who is symbolically represented by the altar. But this kiss also expresses the reverence due to the altar of sacrifice, in which the relics of saints are enshrined, reminding us that the saints too participate in the sacrificial liturgy that is about to be celebrated. At the same time, this kissing of the altar is a kind of atonement for Judas’s kiss, linked to the plea that we remain faithful to Christ. When the altar is subsequently incensed, the smoke of the incense recalls the burnt offering that was presented in the Temple service, but also the Magi who came from the East and offered incense to the Son of God as a sign of homage. Furthermore, this incense

reminds us that we ourselves must be ‘the fragrance of Christ’, as Saint Paul writes in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (2:14).

3.4 *The choice of liturgical texts – The order of the readings*

The readings at Mass are also an opportunity to pass on the faith, but in the traditional Roman liturgy, the approach that guided the choice of texts is quite different from that which prevails in the ‘new liturgy’. In this regard, Klaus Gamber quotes Pius Parsch, who, in his Introduction to *The Year of Salvation*, wrote: ‘In the Gospel, it is Christ who appears and speaks to us. Let us not regard the Gospel so much as a teaching, but rather as an epiphany (appearance) of Christ. Furthermore, the Gospel usually indicates what the central action of the mystery being celebrated is.’³³ Klaus Gamber adds: “By contrast, in accordance with the Protestant conception of worship, the new arrangement of the readings serves first and foremost the instruction and ‘edification’ of the congregation.”³⁴

In the traditional liturgy, therefore, the readings were conceived as an ‘epiphany’ rather than as ‘teaching’. The aim was not, as the Council had requested, that ‘within a specified number of years, the major part of the Holy Scriptures should be read to the people’ (SC 51). Since the introduction of the law of *lectio continua*, particularly for Old Testament texts, there is rarely, in the ‘new liturgy’, any connection between the readings and the Gospel. Furthermore, the intention was to present the most important texts of the Evangelists over a three-year period, and as a result, the liturgical law designed to offer the faithful revelations of God was abandoned.

‘This new structure was clearly devised by exegetes rather than liturgists,’ notes Klaus Gamber. Consider, for example, Peter’s confession that Christ is the Messiah. In Matthew’s Gospel, in response to Christ’s question, he replies: ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God’; and Christ then promises him the primacy: ‘You are Peter, and on this rock...’ In Mark and Luke – which are suggested for the other two years instead of Matthew – we simply have: ‘You are the Messiah’. In this case, the Gospel is no longer a proclamation; it needs to be supplemented by an exegetical sermon to explain why we have such different traditions.

³³ *La réforme liturgique en question*, Éditions Sainte-Madeleine, 1992, p. 61.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

I have published a study in which I sought to examine how, in the traditional Roman rite, the readings and Gospel passages of the Lenten liturgy prepared the faithful for the feast of Easter,³⁵ to highlight the connections between the texts and each of the celebrations, and to demonstrate the extent to which the traditional liturgy was able to bring together different themes. The oldest Lenten Masses were those celebrated on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and they were primarily intended for candidates for baptism. The Masses on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays are of more recent origin; their main theme is that of suffering, contrition and the Christian life.

The choice of readings for the six Sundays of Lent is particularly significant: the Gospel readings for the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of Lent present the attitude of rejection and the struggle against the powers opposed to Christ; those for the 2nd, 4th and 6th Sundays, by contrast, present positive attitudes towards Christ. Furthermore, there is an internal connection between the Gospels of the 1st and 2nd Sundays, those of the 3rd and 4th, and those of the 5th and 6th. In the ‘new liturgy’, the opposition between the Gospels of the first two Sundays of Lent—namely, the temptation and the Transfiguration of Christ—was retained, but a different evangelist was used for each of the three years—here again, exegesis has taken precedence over liturgy!

3.5 *The transmission of the faith in the Roman Canon*

Let us now examine the transmission of the faith in the traditional liturgy, and more specifically in what constitutes its very heart: the Canon.

Here is what the Council of Trent says regarding the dogmatic status of the Canon: ‘Since it is fitting that holy things should be administered in a holy manner, and since this sacrifice is the holiest of all, so that it may be offered with dignity and reverence, the Catholic Church instituted, many centuries ago, the holy Canon, so pure of all error that there is nothing in it which does not greatly exude holiness and piety and which does not lift up to God the spirit of those who offer it. It is clear, indeed, that it is composed either of the very words of Christ, or of the traditions of the Apostles and the pious instructions of the holy pontiffs.’³⁶

³⁵ Robert KRAMER: ‘Preparation for Easter – The Readings and Gospels of the Lenten Liturgy of the Traditional Roman Rite as an Aid to Preparation for Easter’, in the series: *Pro Sancta Ecclesia*, no. 1, Munich 2001.

³⁶ Denzinger 1745.

What are the main doctrinal assertions conveyed to us by the Roman Canon?

3.5.1 *The Church*

According to Theodor Schnitzler,³⁷ the predominant idea in the Canon is that of *the Ecclesia*:

‘The Canon presents us with a self-portrait of the *Bride of Christ*. At this hour when the bride advances towards the *nuptiae agni* – the wedding of the Lamb – she adorns herself in all her finery, like the bride in Psalm 44.’³⁸

This image recalls the great vision of Saint Hildegard, in the **Scivias**, where she writes:

I then saw how the woman I had already seen [the Church] suddenly sprang forth, like a flash of light, from the eternal decree, and how divine power led her to the Son of God hanging on the Cross. Bathed in the blood flowing from the wound in his side and rising in a bubbling stream, she was spiritually united, by the will of the heavenly Father, to the Son of God, and she received, as a precious wedding gift, his holy Flesh and his holy Blood. Then I heard a voice from heaven say to her: ‘Behold, my Son, the bride I give you to restore my people! Let her be their Mother. I give life to souls through the redemptive rebirth by the Spirit and by water.’ Then the Woman grew in power until she reached the fullness of her strength, and then an altar appeared, towards which she often made her way. She never ceased to cast a respectful gaze upon her wedding gift and humbly presented it to the Heavenly Father and his angels. Then a priest appeared, clothed in sacred vestments, who came to the altar to celebrate the divine mysteries, and at that moment a flash of light suddenly burst forth in the heavens. The angels descended, and the light flooded the altar. And so it remained until the priest stepped away from the altar when the holy sacrifice was completed.³⁹

We may therefore say that the Canon is the Church’s confession: indeed, we do not find Christ only in relation to the Church – ‘... *quae tibi offerimus pro Ecclesia tua sancta catholica*’, says the priest in the first prayer of the Canon, the **Te igitur**. ‘**Ecclesia sancta**’ – these are words dating back to the 3rd century, to the time of the martyrs, which

³⁷ Nikolaus GHR: *Das heilige Meßopfer dogmatisch, liturgisch und asketisch erklärt*, Fribourg 1922, 17th–19th edition, vol. 1, p. 132

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 132–133.

³⁹ Hildegard of Bingen: **Wisse die Wege – Scivias**, Salzburg 1955 (3rd ed.), p. 188.

attest to the '*Ecclesia sancta*' found in the great intercessory prayers of the Good Friday liturgy. '*Sancta*' reminds us that this Church is '*separata a peccatoribus*', set apart from all peoples, called to separate itself from a pagan world devoid of morality in order to live a life of purity and chastity. In the *Gloria*, we proclaim: '*Tu solus sanctus!*' The Church shares in this holiness of God, and whoever belongs to the Church is numbered among those of whom Christ said, in the Priestly Prayer: 'They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth: your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. For their sake I consecrate myself, so that they too may be consecrated in truth' (Jn 17:16–19) – '*ut sint sanctificati*'!

The other term is equally bold: *catholica*! In the age of the martyrs, when Christians were few in number, this term looked to the future; it was a confession, an affirmation that one day the tiny mustard seed of the Kingdom of God would become a tree spreading across the whole earth. Even today, whilst the decline in numbers is reducing the universal Church in many places to a 'small flock', this '*catholica*' is once again a word of hope and faith.

At the same time, this 'holy, catholic Church' is also a Church that offers a sacrifice: '*Opferimus!*' But it is specified: '*Opferimus pro*'. This '*pro*' means, of course, first and foremost, 'for' – so we offer for the good of the Church. But it can also be translated as: 'in place of, on behalf of', in the sense of: 'as representing the whole Church'. For, ultimately, it is *the Church* that offers. Here we find the great vision of Saint Hildegard, in which the Church steps forward to the altar to offer the sacrifice.

Furthermore, the Church is the 'one' and 'apostolic' Church: '*una cum famulo Papa nostro ... et antistite nostro ... et omnibus orthodoxis, atque catholicis et apostolicis cultoribus*' – this refers to all the bishops of the world. The liturgy is carried out not by the 'community' but by 'the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'.

The Canon emphasises another essential feature of the Church: it is 'hierarchical': '*una cum papa ... una cum antistite ... una cum omnibus ... fidei cultoribus*'! Indeed, Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of the Apostles, had already said: 'It is not permitted to celebrate the agape without the bishop'.⁴⁰ This hierarchical Church is a 'family', a 'holy people' assisted by 'sinful servants', as stated in the **Hanc igitur** preceding the consecration: '*servitutis tuae, et cunctae familiae tuae*'; and, after the consecration: '*nos servi tui, sed et plebs tua sancta*'; and again: '*nobis quoque peccatoribus famulis tuis*'. The Church is therefore the holy

⁴⁰ *ad Sm. 2.*

people of God and, at the same time, she is the holy family of God. As the people of God, she is, in a sense, the heir to the people of the Old Testament; as the family of God, she is called to the 'Upper Room' where, just as Christ washed the feet of his apostles, the successors of the Apostles and those who assist them – the priests – show her fatherly care.

Also part of the Church, as the Canon so aptly puts it, are the saints: '*communicantes ... offerimus*'. We might even say that they embody the perfect Church, for there is no longer any fault or sin in them. The souls in Purgatory also belong to the family of God; for them we may offer the fruits of the sacrifice, and they, in turn, come to our aid.

3.5.2 *The priest and the priesthood*

In the Canon we find profound words about the priest. Generally speaking, it is the priest who offers the sacrifice '*pro Ecclesia sancta catholica*', thus representing the whole Church. As an old saying goes, '*nemo fit sibi sacerdos* – no one makes himself a priest'! We read similarly in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Every high priest, indeed, [is] taken from among men' (Heb 5:1); he alone – for all! What was said to the priest at his consecration by the bishop, when the chalice was handed to him: '*Accipe potestatem offerre* – Receive the power to offer the sacrifice', is in a sense spiritually renewed at every Mass when, together with the Pope and his bishop, he celebrates the sacrifice. In this sense, he is a 'servant': '*nos servi tui*'. Did not Paul himself evoke the figure of the servant in speaking of Christ? Immense is the dignity of the priest who, *in himself*, is nothing. The priest who would seek to make himself a 'lord' would completely distort the priesthood – *servitus*!

At his ordination, the priest received, as his primary mission, the task of offering the sacrifice, which he performs '*in persona Christi*' – for the people of God. He forms the link between Christ's sacrifice and the Church's sacrifice. When he offers the sacrifice, by offering himself, he shares in the sacrificial offering that Christ made of himself and, in so doing, becomes a model for the faithful. *Sacerdos et hostia*! When we consider the priest from this perspective, the image of the servant is stripped of any reference to a menial occupation; this is not a matter of a purely social activity; on the contrary, this image focuses on the essential, namely the primacy of full Eucharistic and liturgical authority.

The prayer '*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*' evokes four virtues that must characterise the priest: humility (*peccatoribus*), trust (*sperantibus*), the joy of labouring in the Lord's vineyard (*partem aliquam et societatem cum sanctis*) and the aspiration to holiness (the 14 names of saints).

3.5.3 *The sacrifice*

What is most striking about the Canon is that it does not primarily mention Christ's sacrifice but, rather, the sacrifice of the Church: '*uti accepta habeas ... haec dona, haec munera, haec sancta sacrificia illibata*'. This observation also applies to the other passages in the Canon that refer to sacrifice: '*Hanc oblationem servitutis nostrae, sed et cunctae familiae tuae*' and: '*quam oblationem*'. And even after the Canon, when Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is made present, the priest still says: '*de tuis donis ac datis*' – which obviously refers to the natural offerings of bread and wine, through which the Church expresses her desire to offer a sacrifice. Similarly, the prayer '*Supra quae*' relates to the Church's sacrifice, which she asks God to be pleased to accept, just as he accepted the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. And right up to the most solemn of the prayers of offering: '*Jube haec perferri*', which relates to the Church's offering and asks that it be brought before the heavenly altar. Clearly, the Church is so convinced of the need to make Christ's one sacrifice her own, as Saint Paul says, that she always speaks of *her own* sacrifice. And every member of the faithful must, too, make this disposition to sacrifice their own.

At the same time, the Canon states that the Church's sacrifice is a sacrifice of supplication, of praise and of reparation. The sacrifice is offered *pro* – for; in the prayer for the living and the dead, the sacrifice is expressly described as a '*sacrificium laudis*'; and, in the *Hanc igitur*, we ask God to accept it '*placatus* – with goodwill'.

But where is the sacrifice of Christ mentioned? In the double transubstantiation! This is not yet explicit when the bread is transformed into the Body of Christ, but it is very clear at the moment of the consecration of the wine: '*qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum*'. This is, moreover, why, after the consecration, the priest says: '*hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam*'. Andreas Jungmann described these words as 'a brief hymn to the Blessed Sacrament'⁴¹ because, here, the sacrifice of the Church and the sacrifice of Christ become one.

⁴¹ **Missarum Sollemnia**, vol. 2, pp. 272–273 of the German edition.

One could find many other doctrinal statements in the Canon, for example concerning the image it presents of God or of Christ. But we shall confine ourselves here to the examples we have given.

4. Catechism and Liturgy

4.1. *The Liturgy in the Catechism of the Catholic Church*

As in the case of the profession of faith, the doctrine of the sacraments is preceded, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, by a general introduction devoted to ‘the celebration of the Christian mystery’ – the liturgy of the Church. Indeed, in the liturgy, the Church proclaims and celebrates the salvific event which she has expressed in her profession of faith.

Drawing on the theology of the Fathers, the concept of the sacrament is given a broader meaning, according to which all of Christ’s actions, his proclamation of the Kingdom of God and his entire life are regarded as ‘sacraments’ or ‘mysteries’. Thus Christ is called the ‘original sacrament’, and the Church, which is the mysterious Mystical Body of Christ, the ‘fundamental sacrament’ in which the seven sacraments are rooted.

In this light, it is clear that, in the first chapter of this section—which presents a kind of fundamental catechesis—the *Catechism* speaks of the ‘sacramental economy’ of salvation and presents the liturgy as a work of the Holy Trinity (1077–1112); building on this, it provides an overview of the sacraments and of all that they have in common in doctrine and in each celebration (1113–1134 and 1135–1199). Then, when presenting each sacrament in turn, it groups them into ‘sacraments of Christian initiation’ – Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist –, ‘sacraments of healing’ – Penance and Anointing of the Sick – and ‘sacraments of service to the community’ – Holy Orders and Matrimony. For each sacrament, the text first provides an explanation of its name; the sacrament in question is then presented in its historical context, that is to say, with its significance in the Old Covenant, its roots in the life of Christ and its development within the Church. This catechetical presentation is always set within the context of the liturgical celebration, and concludes with notes concerning the recipient of the sacrament, the minister administering it, and its salvific effects. Like the *Roman Catechism*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also mentions the sacramental practice of the local Churches.

With regard to our theme, ‘Liturgy and Catechesis’, the way in which the *Catechism* presents the sacrament of the Eucharist gives cause for reflection. It states first and foremost

first of all that ‘the Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation’ (1322), and in this regard it quotes the conciliar document **Sacrosanctum Concilium**: ‘Our Saviour, at the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages, until he comes...’ (SC 47). Thus, the celebration of the Eucharist is clearly understood and presented as ‘sacrifice’.

However, this document no longer refers to this dimension when it subsequently presents the Eucharist as ‘the source and summit of Christian life’: here, the emphasis is placed on ‘participation in the divine life’.

In *the Catechism*’s explanation of the various names for this sacrament, we note that it first refers to the ‘Eucharist’, then to the ‘Lord’s Supper’ – with a reference to the ‘Last Supper’ (although the Jewish Passover was not merely a ‘meal’: according to Ex 12:27, it was a ‘Passover sacrifice in honour of Yahweh’!); next come the terms ‘breaking of bread’ and ‘Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)’; only then is it described as the ‘memorial of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection’, a ‘Holy Sacrifice’ – ‘holy sacrifice of the Mass’, ‘sacrifice of praise’, ‘spiritual sacrifice’, ‘pure and holy sacrifice’ – before moving on to other designations.

The historical section recalls the numerous references to bread and wine in the Old Covenant, then in the life of Jesus (the wedding at Cana, the feeding of the five thousand), before the account of the institution of the Eucharist is given. It is worth noting here that, whilst Luke always speaks of ‘the Passover’, the reference here is always to the ‘Passover meal’. The words:

‘Do this in remembrance of me’ are not interpreted as referring to the sacrifice but simply as a constant reminder of the meal.

The celebration of the Eucharist, ‘the Mass of all ages’, is first presented to us in its fundamental structure: the Liturgy of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist, and it is clearly emphasised that this corresponds to Jesus’ ‘Passover meal’ with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are then introduced to ‘the flow of the celebration’, in which, ‘with the Eucharistic Prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving and consecration, we reach the heart and the high point of the celebration’ (1352). Regarding the consecration, it is stated literally:

‘In the account of the institution, the power of Christ’s words and action, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make his Body and Blood, his sacrifice offered on the Cross once and for all, sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine’ (1353).

We can therefore see that, ontologically, the Eucharist is presented as a ‘sacramental sacrifice – a thanksgiving, a memorial, a presence’. The Eucharist is thus both a ‘sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving’, a ‘memorial’, that is to say, ‘the sacramental actualisation and offering [...] of the Church, which is [the] Body [of Christ]’, it being understood that, here, ‘to commemorate’ is not merely ‘to remember’ but ‘to re-present’, that is to say ‘to make present’, ‘to actualise’ (the sacrifice on the Cross accomplished once and for all); and finally, the Eucharist is a ‘presence’, namely ‘the presence of Christ through the power of his Word and the Holy Spirit’, in connection with which the Council of Trent is cited, which affirmed that in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist are ‘truly, really and substantially contained the Body and Blood, together with the soul and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently, the whole Christ ’ (1374).

The text then goes on to discuss the fruits of this sacrament, all of which are aimed at ‘the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion’ (1382).

To summarise this presentation of the doctrine of the Eucharist, one cannot fail to note that, whilst it does emphasise its sacrificial nature, it attaches disproportionate importance to the ‘concept of the meal’.

4.2 *Catechetical introduction of young people to the liturgy – Holy Mass as the re-enactment of the sacrifice of the Cross*

In a final stage, we shall attempt to illustrate the catechetical introduction of children and adolescents to the liturgy by taking as an example a particular aspect of the sacrament of the Eucharist, namely the affirmation that, in the Holy Mass, Christ’s sacrifice is made present. On this point, I shall have to content myself with providing a few important guidelines of a didactic and methodological nature.

4.2.1 *Narrative presentation (ages 10 to 13)*

Let us begin with children aged 10 to 13. Generally speaking, it can be said that, in this age group, children have a remarkably realistic view of the world (their environment), accompanied by a multitude of specific ideas. At this age, children are fascinated by reality and are eager to learn. Theoretical thinking begins to diverge from practical thinking, but it must still be supported by examples: children have little capacity for abstraction at this stage. Therefore, the truths of the catechism must be conveyed through stories.

In this sense, it is not enough simply to say that Christ's sacrifice is made present in the Mass; this statement must be accompanied by an illustrative narrative – the starting point for which is the Mass itself. Here, the priest refers to the 'account of the Institution'. This text must be set within the context of the biblical narratives: what was this evening meal during which Jesus took bread? How did Jesus prepare for this evening? What is the significance and importance of the Passover for the Jews? (Important: the *Passover* was not merely a meal, but a sacrifice! See Ex 12:27). What did Christ do after this meal (the washing of the feet; then he introduced something new: 'This is my body, given for you – This is my blood, shed for you')? We draw a table on which there is a plate with bread and a cup. Then we ask: 'What did Christ see when he spoke of his body and his blood?' – His own death, the following day. Next to the drawing of the table, we draw the summit of a mountain on which a cross stands. Then, beneath these two drawings, we draw a table on which the paten and the chalice are placed, with a cross between them. Two arrows extend from the top drawings – that of the table and that of the cross – to the bottom drawing, signifying that the events of Holy Thursday and Good Friday are both present and active in the transubstantiation that takes place during Mass. To conclude this lesson, we can learn a hymn.⁴²

4.2.2 *Thematic teaching for young people aged 14 to 17*

For young people aged 14 to 17, adolescence marks a break with childhood; they are developing the capacity for abstract and logical thought and discovering their sense of self, which is accompanied by emotional instability. 'What's in it for me?' – this is a question often asked, indicating that young people are no longer content to passively accept ready-made conclusions but want to discover them for themselves.

For religious education in this age group, it would in fact be necessary to have a good understanding of the 'science of motivation' (*Motivationslehre*) in order to fully grasp what convinces pupils to attend religious education lessons. I have drawn up, for the benefit of continuing professional development centres for secondary school religious education teachers, twelve principles of motivating religious education, and I shall mention one here, which I have formulated as follows: 'For every

⁴² In Bavaria, the rich repertoire of folk songs offers us, on this point, a song whose lyrics and melody are much loved by children – see Joseph Gabler: **Für mich nahmst du das Kreuz auf dich**, Regensburg 1890, no. 142: *'Für mich nahmst du das Kreuz auf dich, o mein Jesus! The cross that you bear moves me, O my Jesus! O my Saviour, my Redeemer from death, deliver me from all distress, O my Jesus'* ["For me, you took up your cross, O my Jesus! / The cross you bear pains me, O my Jesus! / You, my Saviour, who snatch me from death / Save me from all evil, O my Jesus!"] (this hymn has 6 verses).

lesson, prepare and present the subject to be taught using the five in-depth questions defined by Hans Schiefele⁴³.

The objective is therefore as follows: how to present a topic to pupils in such a way as to encourage them to learn it. ^{1st} question: What is *the essence* of the topic? – This involves summarising the topic in a few words so that it can be easily grasped. Question ²: In what form can this topic be *understood*? – This involves presenting the topic in its ‘reality’. Question ³: What *question* does this topic raise, and what is the *answer* to that question? – The aim is to show the origins of the subject. ^{Fourth} question: How does this subject relate to me? – The aim is to highlight the human aspect of the subject. ^{Fifth} question: How has this subject *been put into practice*? – The aim is to illustrate, using examples, the impact this subject has had throughout history.

1. What is *the essence* of the subject? – In the case we have chosen, it could be formulated as follows: every Mass is the re-enactment of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, which took place historically once and for all.
2. In what form can this subject be *perceived*? – Christ’s command: ‘Do this in memory of me’, and its implementation in the rite of the Mass (almost purely verbal in the ‘new liturgy’ but very clearly expressed in the traditional liturgy).
3. What is the *question* raised by this subject, and what has been the *answer* given to this question? – Christ: How can I enable mankind to benefit from my sacrifice of redemption? The answer is the free offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which the priest and every member of the faithful must unite themselves to Christ in the gift he makes of himself to the Father.
4. How does this concern me? If I do not wish to be lost, I too need redemption.
5. How has this theme *been put into practice*? In each of the rites, an effort has been made to convey this gift of Christ ‘catechetically’. – It would be possible here to introduce the distinction between the ‘new liturgy’ and the ‘old liturgy’.

To convey pedagogically the statement: ‘The Mass is the re-enactment of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, which took place historically once and for all’, we shall highlight the fact that we all need redemption, to be delivered – from illness, from misery, from death. Everyone wants to live life to the full: ‘The important thing is to be in good health!’ Is that really true?

⁴³ Hans SCHIEFELE: *Lernmotivation und Motivlernen – Grundzüge einer erziehungswissenschaftlichen theory of motivation*, Munich 1974.

What Christ offers us: What kind of life does He offer us? ‘I am the life.’ ‘I am the vine, and you are the branches.’ ‘I want you to have life, and to have it in abundance.’ What He offers us is ‘eternal life’. Perhaps also: ‘What must I do to have eternal life?’ – and Christ’s reply: ‘Sell everything you have and follow me!’ Or again: ‘You alone have the words of eternal life.’ Or, indeed, the doctrine of the two paths: choose life or death.

‘The night he was betrayed’ – what did Christ give us that night? The answer is the Eucharist – sacrifice and communion.

To see the form the Church has given to this message, one need only consider the rite of the Mass; one might also mention the way in which certain figures lived out this rite: Charles Foucauld or Padre Pio.

We could conclude this lesson with three or four depictions of the crucifixion, showing how different artists have sought to represent redemption through Christ.

4.2.3 *Conceptual guidance for 18- to 20-year-olds*

Finally, for young adults, the transmission of the faith should be linked to the question of the meaning of life and that of values, so as to enable them to form their own worldview. However, a purely systematic presentation is not enough – for that, the framework would need to be defined; this presentation must be made in an ‘organic’ way, and must therefore include the emotional dimension. A good way of illustrating the values applicable to the emotional realm is to present specific examples.

Let us look more closely at how to present the statement ‘The Mass is the re-enactment of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, which took place historically once and for all’ to young people in this age group.

One could take as a starting point the account of Charles de Foucauld’s conversion⁴⁴ and supplement it with an extract from the letter in which he speaks of his vocation on.⁴⁵ To arrive at faith, it was not enough for Charles de Foucauld simply to reflect; he also had to go to confession (Christ: ‘Whoever does what is true comes into the light – Jn 3:21’); and his living faith in God immediately led him to follow Christ unconditionally ‘to make of

⁴⁴ For example, in M. CARROUGES: **Charles de Foucauld**, Fribourg 1958, excerpts from which can be found in: *Religion am Gymnasium* 10, Munich 1984, pp. 9–10.

⁴⁵ ‘Letter to Henry de Castries’ dated 14 August 1901, quoted in: **Jesus Caritas**, no. 1 (1962), p. 32; quoted in: *Grundkurs Religion* 3, 3rd semester, Munich 1978, pp. 128–129.

‘to do good to souls, not through words but through prayer, the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass, contrition and the practice of charity’.⁴⁶

In a second stage, one might reflect on ‘a life outside the Eucharist’⁴⁷: an insatiable hunger for prestige, power, security and love, the need to understand – all this permeates human life. But behind this hunger and these desires, behind the object of this hunger and these desires, there is always death, which is present in all things and which calls everything into question, as Elsa Laker-Schüler puts it in her poem: ‘*Listen, God*’.⁴⁸ And yet, the answer exists: ‘I am the bread of life’ (Jn 6:51), says Jesus. In these words, everything is said about life and death: some turn away from him, whilst others draw closer to him (Jn 6:66–69). He who heals the sick, frees the possessed from demons and raises the dead can rightly claim to be the source of life. Thus, in the Eucharist, Jesus enables us to realise what we long for: to be with God (in Paradise). We share in divine life – something that exists nowhere else. In the Eucharist, we are even incorporated into Jesus’ sacrifice, which means that this is not merely an obvious inner process, free from problems or consequences, but that it is truly a matter of life and death.⁴⁹

In a third stage, we must address the central mystery of the Mass, which lies not in Communion but in the actualisation of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross (cf. on this point the text of St Hildegard’s vision in paragraph 3.5.1). What the priest accomplishes *in persona Christi* at the moment of consecration—namely, the offering of himself to God the Father—we must also do for our part, if we take seriously the promises of our baptism and the call we have received to follow Christ (cf. Charles de Foucauld).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Cf. Robert KRAMER: ‘Leben aus der Eucharistie’, in: *Grundkurs Religion 3*, 3rd semester, *Die Frage nach dem Menschen*, edited by Robert Kramer, Munich 1978, pp. 143–145.

⁴⁸ Else LASKER-SCHÜLER (1846–1945): *Gott hör*: ‘Night closes in around my eyes / Like a ring. / My pulse turned my blood to flames / And yet everything around me was grey and cold. - O God, whilst I am still alive / I dream of death. / In water I drink it and choke on it in bread. / There is no measure for my sorrow on your scales. - God, hear me ... In your favourite blue colour / I sang a song of the roof of your heaven – / And yet I did not awaken the day in your eternal breath. / My heart is almost ashamed before you of its numb scar. – Where do I end? – O God!! For into the stars, / And into the moon I looked, into every valley of your fruits. / The red wine is already turning stale within its berry ... / And everywhere – the bitterness – in every seed.’

⁴⁹ I presented the ideas in this text in the form of a table in a teaching booklet accompanying my book: **Die Frage nach dem Menschen**, published by the Catholic School Commission II in Bavaria (Munich 1988).

To conclude, one could bring this reflection to life with the aid of an illustration or a painting, for example Siegfried Köder's **The Fool in Christ**,⁵⁰ which depicts a man dressed in a jester's costume and tied upside down to a cross planted in the middle of a circus arena, exposed to the gaze of a crowd of spectators. Taking this painting as a starting point, we might ask: 'Are we, as Christians, ultimately "fools" in this world? – And why not? – It is not essential to be crucified upside down like Peter. – But it is easier to be relegated to the 'last place'. If 'following Christ' means entering into communion with Jesus' life and destiny, then we must not be afraid to enter the 'arena' of the world and become a 'spectacle for the world'. ' "The wisdom of this world is folly before God" (1 Cor 3:15), as Saint Paul rightly tells us. But the reverse is also true: the folly of this world is wisdom before God. In this world, it is better to be a "fool in Christ" than a so-called wise person who allows themselves to be led astray by fleeting things – for all eternity.

5. Following Christ

The theme of our talk was: 'Liturgy and catechesis' – one immediately sees the connection with 'following Christ'. First, there is Christ's call and his action; it is entirely up to us to take Christ's side. In the liturgy, it is first and foremost Christ who acts and calls; through the rite in which we participate and through the gift of ourselves, we share in Christ's work of universal redemption and, in a sense, make up what is still lacking in Christ's sufferings. If we succeed in awakening an interest in Christ among young people, we will also stir within them a desire to enter into communion with Christ's destiny and future. To achieve this aim, it is important to take part in the liturgy, and that is why it is so important that, when we introduce them to it, we do so with great care.

⁵⁰ *'The Fool in Christ'*, in: *Tübinger Bibel in Bildern*, Katholisches Bibelwerk, Stuttgart 1977.