

THE PROLEPTIC OFFERTORY IN THE VARIOUS LITURGICAL TRADITIONS

G. Díaz-Patri

Introduction

When one observes the Offertory prayers in the tradition of the Roman Rite, what above all draws attention is what liturgists call **prolepsis** (πρόληψις), that is, “anticipation”: the presentation as already accomplished of that which belongs, temporally or logically, to the future—not as a mere foreseeing, but as an anticipatory actualization. In the concrete case of the Mass, this consists in treating the bread and the wine, at the moment when they are offered, as if they were already the Body and Blood of Christ and, consequently, in offering them for the living and the dead in a propitiatory sense.

This aspect has seemed inappropriate to some, and not only to the more or less rationalist liturgists of the twentieth century in dialogue with Protestantism, but it was also included in the list of abuses—proposed for examination and evaluation by the Conciliar Fathers—by the members of the commission specifically delegated *ad hoc* by the Council of Trent, although it was later not deemed a priority to address this point in the conciliar discussions.

Those who view this anticipation in the Offertory with displeasure usually attribute it to a late intrusion, of medieval origin and linked to a Franco-Germanic liturgical conception, within a schema of the Mass that originally did not provide for it. However, it is a fact that a clearly anticipatory sacrificial language is found not only in other rites, both Western and Eastern, but even in other, older parts of the Roman Rite that are indisputably Roman.

We therefore propose to undertake a broad review of the formulas and rites of the Offertory in the various traditions, Eastern and Western, in order to understand the scope of this anticipation and the different nuances that characterize its use. In this exposition we do not intend to enter into the debate concerning the theological-doctrinal implications nor the different liturgical conceptions that this entails; rather, starting from as wide a historical panorama as possible, we aim to trace a cartography of the presence of such anticipation in the various traditions of the Church.

The Apologies

First, we shall attempt to situate them within the framework of the genre to which they belong. The Offertory prayers are in some way related to an element that is constantly present across the different existing liturgical families: the attitude of the priest who, while recognizing himself as unworthy to present himself before the altar of God because of his sins, nevertheless dares to approach it, full of confidence in divine mercy, in order to celebrate the holy mysteries and to offer the sacrifice in expiation for the sins of the people. For this reason, while acknowledging his unworthiness, he asks God to make him worthy of this ministry.

In the West, this is represented in a particular way by the so-called “apologies,” whose witnesses begin to appear around the eighth century in the Gelasian sacramentaries copied in Gaul, and which attained enormous diffusion in the tenth and eleventh centuries, only later to disappear almost completely, with only a few examples remaining in use.

This type of prayer is found especially at the culminating moments of the liturgy, when the celebrant is about to present himself in a particular way before the divinity, specifically at the following moments: at the beginning of the Mass, by means of a penitential act performed, in some rites, outside the sanctuary and, in others, at the foot of the altar. Closely related to this is a rite of entry into the sanctuary on the part of the celebrant and those assisting him, present in some form in all rites. At the reading of the Gospel, at the Offertory, and at Communion, prayers of this nature are also found, and in several cases even at the dismissal from the altar at the end of the Mass.

Prayers and Gestures of the Offertory in the Different Traditions

a. The West

1. The Offertory in the *Missale Romanum* and Other Contemporary Missals

When we speak of the *Missale Romanum*, we are not referring solely to the Missal promulgated by Saint Pius V and preserved without modifications, with regard to the Offertory, until 1970. Very often (and sometimes even in works that are not merely popularizing in nature) one encounters the claim that Saint Pius V, in his edition, decided to “fix a selection of prayers” taken from a group that until then were found in one missal or another; hence it is said that he “standardized the rite, eliminated ambiguous local variants, and rigidly fitted the Offertory into the sequence: Offertory → Canon → Consecration.”

However, an examination of the various “curial” missals and those of the Franciscan “rule” that have come down to us—from the earliest that can be identified as such (thirteenth century) up to the one printed by Giunta in Venice three years before that of Saint Pius V, in 1567—shows that this set of prayers had remained unchanged since the earliest manuscripts, that is, for three hundred years prior to Saint Pius V, which makes a total of seven hundred years up to our own time.

This confusion undoubtedly arises from the frequent failure to remember that Saint Pius V did not produce a Missal as a synthesis of the different ones then in use in the West, but rather limited himself to what we would today call a “critical edition” of the Missal received from the tradition that had until then been known as the *Missale secundum usum romanae curiae*, or under a similar name, and which from that point onward would be stably called the *Missale Romanum*.

The Latin variants of the prayers and rites of the Offertory (as well as, moreover, the sequences) that we find in manuscripts or in early printed editions belonged to diocesan missals or to those of religious orders, and not to the use of the Roman Curia. Consequently, if they were more than two hundred years old, they were not affected by the provisions of Saint Pius V; otherwise, they were simply replaced by the Missal he promulgated. No work of “stabilization,” therefore, was carried out in a matter that had already been stable for three centuries.

The scheme of the formula for the Offertory of the bread in the Roman Missal is as follows:

“Súscipe, Sancte Pater, hanc immaculátam hóstiam, quam ego (...) óffero tibi, pro innumerábilibus peccátis (...) meis (...) sed et pro ómnibus fidélibus vivis atque defúntis: ut (...) proficiat ad salútem in vitam aetérnam.”

Receive, Holy Father, this immaculate host, which I (...) offer to You for my innumerable sins (...), and also for all the faithful living and dead, that it may profit unto salvation in eternal life.

As we have said, this formula was already fixed in the thirteenth century. As for the other Latin formulas, we shall in general limit ourselves to mentioning the rites that remained in use until the twentieth century; for a broader perspective on earlier medieval usages and on other diocesan missals and those of religious orders, see Paul Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire dans la liturgie romaine du VIIe au XVIe siècle*.

In the Carmelite rite one finds the following formula:

Acceptabilis sit maiestati tuae, omnipotens Deus, oblatio haec quam tibi offerimus pro reátibus et facinóribus nostris: et pro stabilitate sancte Ecclesie Catholice, necnon et pro animábus ómnium fidélium defunctórum. Per Christum Dóminum nóstrum. Amen.

May this oblation which we offer to You be acceptable to Your majesty, almighty God, for our faults and offenses, and for the stability of the holy Catholic Church, as well as for the souls of all the faithful departed. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer is also used, with some differences, in the Mozarabic rite (Missal of Cisneros). The priest then says another prayer, which is also found (almost identical) in the Missal of Lyons:

Hanc oblatiónem quaésumus, Dómine, ut placátus admítte, et ómnium offeréntium, et eórum pro quibus tibi offértur, peccáta indúlge.

This oblation, we beseech You, Lord, graciously accept, and forgive the sins of all who offer it and of those for whom it is offered to You.

The Offertory formulas in the Ambrosian rite, both for the bread and for the wine, are not anticipatory, but rather ask for the transformation of the bread and wine offered into the Body and Blood of Christ respectively; nevertheless, the bread is called “holy,” an adjective that can only be admitted from the perspective of transformation:

Suscipe clementissime Pater hunc panem sanctum, ut fiat Unigeniti tui Corpus, in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

Receive, most merciful Father, this holy Bread, that it may become the Body of Your Only-begotten Son.

Nevertheless, there follows an apology that may be viewed as proleptic:

Omnipotens, sempiterne Deus, placábilis, et acceptábilis sit Tibi haec oblátio, quam ego indígnus pro me mísero peccatóre, et pro delíctis meis innumerábilibus tuae pietáti óffero, ut véniam, et remissionem ómnium peccatórum meórum mihi concédas, et iniquitates meas ne despexeris, sed sola tua misericordia mihi prosit indigno.

Almighty and eternal God, may this oblation be propitious and acceptable to You, which I, unworthy, offer to Your mercy for myself, a wretched sinner, and for my innumerable offenses, that You may grant me pardon and the remission of all my sins, and may You not despise my iniquities, but may Your mercy alone profit me, unworthy though I am.

Toward the end of the Offertory, the priest recites an epiclesis-like blessing whose second part has an anticipatory character:

Benedictio Dei omnipotentis Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti copiosa de caelis descendat super hanc nostram oblationem: et accepta Tibi sit haec oblatio Domine Sancte Pater omnipotens Aeterne Deus, misericordiosissime rerum conditor.

May the abundant blessing of almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit descend from heaven upon this our oblation; and may this oblation be acceptable to You, Lord Holy Father, almighty and eternal God, most merciful creator of all things.

Finally, the Dominican rite, addressing not the Father but the Most Holy Trinity, expresses itself thus:

Súscipe, Sancta Trínitas, hanc oblatiónem, quam tibi óffero (...) et praesta, ut in conspéctu tuo tibi placens ascéndat; et meam, et ómnium fidélium salútem operétur aetérnam.

Receive, Holy Trinity, this oblation which I offer to You (...), and grant that it may ascend before Your presence as an offering pleasing to You, and that it may work my salvation and that of all the faithful unto eternal life.

At the moment of the offering of the chalice, the tradition of the Roman Missal calls it the *Calix salutáris* and offers it in a propitiatory sense:

Offerimus tibi, Domine, calicem salutáris, tuam deprecántes cleméntiam: ut in conspéctu divínae maiestátis tuae, pro nostra et totíus mundi salúte, cum odóre suavitátis ascéndat.

We offer to You, Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching Your clemency, that it may ascend before Your divine majesty as an odor of sweetness, for our salvation and that of the whole world.

This formula is also used by the rite of the Church of Braga. Among the other rites, only the Mozarabic includes a formula for the offering of the chalice, which is in fact merely a variant of the Roman rite:

Offerimus tibi Domine calicem ad benedicendum sanguinem Christi Filii tui: deprecamurque clementiam tuam: ut ante conspectum divinae Majestatis tuae cum odore suavitatis ascendat. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum.

We offer to You, Lord, the chalice to be blessed as the Blood of Christ, Your Son, and we beseech Your clemency that, before the presence of Your divine Majesty, it may ascend with an odor of sweetness. Through the same Christ our Lord.

The Ambrosian rite, for its part, repeats the formula already mentioned for the offering of the bread, with the corresponding changes:

Suscipe, clementissime Pater, hunc calicem, vinum aqua mixtum, ut fiat Unigeniti tui sanguis. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

Receive, most merciful Father, this chalice, wine mixed with water, that it may become the Blood of Your Only-begotten Son. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The other rites have no special formula to accompany the offering of the chalice.

The last of the Offertory prayers, “*Suscipe Sancta Trinitas...*”, is the one documented at the earliest date (indeed, it already appears in the most ancient missals; it is also found in the Lyonese and Ambrosian rites, and it exists as well in the Carmelite rite, considerably modified, as the sole Offertory formula).

Although at first glance it may seem to be no more than a simple repetition of the “*Suscipe Sancte Pater,*” it in fact constitutes its complement.

The Dominican Offertory (cf. *supra*), although it begins with the same words, by its structure and content is more closely akin to the *Suscipe Sancte Pater*.

The most complete scheme is the following: the priest asks the Triune God to receive the oblation offered in memory of the death of Christ; the Roman and Ambrosian rites add the Resurrection and Ascension; the Lyonese rite adds the mention of the Incarnation and the Nativity, as well as a mention in honor of the Holy Spirit the Consoler. It is then offered in honor of the saints: first the Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, “all the saints who have been pleasing to God since the beginning of the world,” those whose feast is celebrated on that day, those whose names are inscribed in the “diptychs,” and those whose relics are found upon the altar on which the celebration takes place; and for our salvation, that all those whom we honor may intercede for us.

The Ambrosian rite also possesses two prayers that begin in the same way: one for the priest, and another that enumerates in detail the intentions for which the sacrifice is offered:

Et suscipe, sancta Trinitas, hanc oblationem quam tibi offerimus pro regimine, et custodia, atque unitate Catholicae fidei: et pro veneratione quoque beatæ Dei Genitricis Mariæ, omniumque simul Sanctorum tuorum: et pro salute, et incolumitate famulorum, famularumque tuarum, et omnium, pro quibus clementiam tuam implorare polliciti sumus, et quorum quarumque eleemosynas suscepimus, et omnium fidelium Christianorum, tam vivorum, quam defunctorum, ut te miserante, remissionem omnium peccatorum, et æternæ beatitudinis præmia, in tuis laudibus fideliter perseverando percipere mereantur, ad gloriam, et honorem nominis tui, Deus misericordissime rerum conditor.

And receive, Holy Trinity, this oblation which we offer to You for the governance, protection, and unity of the Catholic faith; and also in veneration of the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, and of all Your saints together; and for the salvation and protection of Your servants, male and female, and of all those for whom we have pledged to implore Your clemency, and of those whose alms we have received, and of all the faithful Christians, both living and dead, that, by Your mercy, they may merit to obtain the remission of all their sins and the rewards of eternal beatitude, persevering faithfully in Your praises, to the glory and honor of Your name, O God, most merciful creator of all things.

Next follows the prayer taken from Daniel 3:39–40:

In spíritu humilitátis et in ánimo contríto suscipiámur a te, Dómine: et sic fiat sacrificium nostrum in conspéctu tuo hódie, ut pláceat tibi, Dómine Deus.

With a humble spirit and a contrite heart may we be received by You, O Lord; and thus may our sacrifice be made today in Your presence in such a way that it may please You, O Lord God.

This prayer is found, with slight variations, in all the Latin rites. Here sacrifice is spoken of clearly, but this prayer does not necessarily lead one to conceive a sacrifice already present; rather, it could be read as a request to obtain a suitable disposition to offer properly the sacrificial act that will take place shortly thereafter in the consecration.

In the Carthusian rite, when saying *In spiritu humilitatis...*, the priest elevates the chalice. This was also the only private Offertory prayer in the monastic rites of Cluny and Cîteaux.

Finally, in the Roman rite, the priest says, addressing the faithful:

Oráte, fratres, ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptábile fiat apud Deum Patrem omnipoténtem.

Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father.

The response in the Roman rite is:

Suscípiat Dóminus sacrificium de mánibus tuis ad laudem et glóriam nóminis sui, ad utilitátem quoque nostram, totíusque Ecclésiæ suæ sanctæ.

May the Lord receive the sacrifice from your hands for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and that of all His holy Church.

Whereas in the Lyonese rite the response is:

Dóminus Deus omnípotens suscípiat sacrificium de ore tuo, et de mánibus tuis, ad utilitátem sanctæ suæ Ecclésiæ, et ad salútem omnis pópuli christiáni, et ad remédium ómnium fidélium defunctorum.

May the Lord God almighty receive the sacrifice from your mouth and from your hands, for the benefit of His holy Church, for the salvation of all the Christian people, and for the relief of all the faithful departed.

In the Carmelite rite it is said:

Memor sit Dóminus omnis sacrificii tui: et holocáustum tuum pingue fiat, tríbuat tibi secúndum cor tuum et omne consílium tuum confírmes.

May the Lord remember all your sacrifice, and may your holocaust be made abundant; may He grant you according to your heart and confirm all your designs.

In the Dominican rite, the *Orate, fratres* remains without response.

And in the Carthusian rite, the priest makes no mention of sacrifice, but limits himself to saying:

Orate fratres pro me peccatore ad Dominum Deum nostrum.

Pray, brethren, for me, a sinner, to the Lord our God.

In this case as well, no response is given.

Although in the *Orate, fratres* mention is made of “the sacrifice,” nevertheless, in this instance the sense of anticipation does not appear univocal, since it could be interpreted as a request to pray for the sacrifice that is about to begin (we are already approaching the end of the Offertory). The same may be said of the corresponding response, in which the ends of the sacrifice are clearly affirmed, but without this necessarily implying an anticipation of it.

2. Presence of Prolepsis in the Ancient Roman Sacramentaries

Twentieth-century liturgists agree that, in the Roman rite, the prayer proper to the offertory was originally the *Secreta*.

Among these prayers there are many that do not present the sacrifice as already present, but rather dispose or prepare the sacrifice that will be offered later; others do not even mention it at all.

Those prayers may instead be considered properly proleptic which call the gifts not yet consecrated *sacrificium, hostia, immolatio*, or by equivalent terms, especially when they are accompanied by demonstratives (*hic, haec, hoc*) and when they speak of an expiatory efficacy already attributed to the oblation, that is, with a language that presupposes a present sacrificial reality, not merely a future one. A considerable number of such prayers are found in the Missal, but we shall dwell above all on the most ancient ones, attested in the Sacramentaries.

With undeniable correspondences to expressions found in the *Suscipe, Sancte Pater*, we have the following examples.

In this prayer of the Gelasian Sacramentary of Angoulême, the Father is addressed with a request that he receive (*suscipe*) the sacrifice set before him (*has oblationes*); the terms by which the celebrant speaks of himself and of his sins belong to the tone of the “apologies” and coincide literally with the *Suscipe, Sancte Pater* of the Roman Offertory (only the terms *innumerabilibus* and *negligentiis* are lacking). We highlight in bold the words that the two texts have in common.

*Suscipe clementissime pater has oblationes, quas **ego indignus famulus tuus offero pro peccatis atque offensionibus meis**, et praecor clementissime pater, ut peccata mea iubeas demittere et uitam sempiternam tribuere.*

Receive, most merciful Father, these oblations which I, your unworthy servant, offer for my sins and offenses; and I beseech you, most merciful Father, to command that my sins be forgiven and to grant everlasting life.

A little further on, the same sacramentary offers a similar formula in which the offering for the dead is explicitly introduced, thus extending the scope of the sacrifice to the communion of the living and the dead.

*Suscipe clementissime pater hanc oblationem, quam tibi offero, ego indignus famulus tuus, **pro requie animarum famulorum famularumque tuarum** illorum et illarum; precor te clementissime pater, ut resurrectionis diem cum refrigerio tuae benignitatis expectent.*

Receive, most merciful Father, this oblation which I, your unworthy servant, offer to you for the rest of the souls of those servants and those handmaids of yours; I beseech you, most

merciful Father, that they may await the day of the resurrection with the refreshment of your kindness.

In the Verona Sacramentary a language very close to that of the *Suscipe, sancte Pater* is employed.

Domine, sancte pater, omnipotens aeterne deus, oblationes familiae tuae propitiatus intende, ut haec piae deuotionis obsequia et rectores sanctificent et regendos.

Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, look graciously upon the oblations of your household, so that these duties of pious devotion may sanctify both those who rule and those who are to be ruled.

The same words addressed to the Father reappear in a prayer of the Gelasian tradition of Angoulême.

Ipse tibi quaesumus Domine sancte pater omnipotens aeterne Deus, sacrificium nostrum reddat acceptum, qui discipulis suis in sui commemorationem hoc fieri hodierna traditione monstrauit.

May he himself, we ask you, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, render our sacrifice acceptable to you—he who today showed to his disciples, by his handing over, that this was to be done in remembrance of him.

In this context, the fragment known as the Missal or Sacramentary of Kiev proves to be particularly significant: a text in Old Church Slavonic written in Glagolitic script, it could depend on a lost Roman archetype, on which the Sacramentary of Padua would also depend, and it would reflect a purely Roman, very ancient pre-Hadrian tradition, datable to the sixth–seventh centuries. In one of the ten *Super Oblata* found in the preserved fragment (prayers that bear the Latin name transliterated and adapted into Slavonic as *nad oplatm*), the offering is explicitly designated as *hostia* and is moreover accompanied by a demonstrative; the Latin retroversion proposed by Mohlberg reads:

Suscipe, domine, quaesumus te, hostiam hanc tibi oblatam pro redemptione hominum et sanitatem nobis da et animas nostras atque corpora emunda precesque nostras suscipe.

Receive, Lord, we beseech you, this host offered to you for the redemption of men; grant us health, cleanse our souls and bodies, and receive our prayers.

A very close prayer is found in the Sacramentary of Padua, where the propitiatory effect of the sacrifice (*placatus*) appears clearly.

Suscipe quaesumus domine hostiam redemptionis humanae et salutem nobis mentis et corporis operare placatus.

Receive, we beseech you, Lord, the host of human redemption, and, appeased, work in us the salvation of mind and body.

In the Verona Sacramentary the oblation is expressly called *hostia spiritalis*, and it is affirmed of it that it is immolated and offered.

Remotis obumbrationibus carnalium uictimarum spiritalem tibi, summe pater, hostiam supplici seruitute deferimus, quae miro ineffabilique mysterio et immolatur semper et eadem semper offertur, pariterque et deuotorum munus et remunerantis est praemium.

With the shadowy figures of carnal victims removed, we offer to you, most high Father, in suppliant service, a spiritual host, which by a wondrous and ineffable mystery is always immolated and the very same is always offered; and it is at once the gift of the devout and the reward of the one who rewards.

The Gelasian and the Angoulême tradition add another formula in which the liberating and reconciling effect of the host, indicated as present by the demonstrative, is emphasized:

***Haec hostia**, domine, quaesumus, et uincula nostrae iniquitatis absoluat et tuae nobis misericordiae dona conciliet,*

May this host, Lord, we beseech you, loose the bonds of our iniquity and obtain for us the gifts of your mercy.

In several prayers of the Gelasian and the Gregorian traditions it is further affirmed that the host is *salutaris*.

*Concede nobis, Domine, quaesumus, ut **haec hostia salutaris** nostrorum fiat **purgatio delictorum** et tuae propitiatio potestatis.*

Grant us, Lord, we beseech you, that this saving host may become the purification of our faults and the propitiation of your power.

Another prayer of the Gelasian has the expression that the *Suscipe, sancte Pater* will later use, “*proficiat ad salutem.*”

*Deus qui legalium differentias hostiarum unius sacrificii perfectione sanxisti, accipe sacrificium a deuotis tibi famulis, et pari benedictione sicut munera Abel sanctifica, ut quod singuli obtulerunt ad maiestatis tuae honorem, cunctis **proficiat ad salutem.***

O God, who established the differences of the legal victims in the perfection of a single sacrifice, receive the sacrifice from your devoted servants, and sanctify it with the same blessing as you sanctified Abel’s offerings, so that what each has offered in honor of your majesty may profit all for salvation.

The expression is also found in the following:

Propiciare, domine, supplicationibus nostris et has oblationes famulorum famularumque tuarum benignus assume, ut quod singuli obtulerunt ad honorem nominis tui, cunctis proficiat ad salutem.

Be propitious, Lord, to our supplications, and graciously accept these oblations of your servants, both men and women, so that what each has offered to the honor of your name may profit all for salvation.

The offering formula of the chalice in the Roman offertory likewise finds precedents in the sacramentaries, for example in the Veronese.

Offerimus, domine, munera tuorum tibi sollemnitatibus grata sanctorum, tuam clementiam depraecantes, ut quod ad illorum gloriam, nobis prosit ad ueniam.

We offer to you, Lord, gifts pleasing to you on the solemnities of your saints, imploring your clemency, that what is offered for their glory may benefit us for pardon.

This other prayer, present several times in the Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries, uses the term *salutaris* to refer to the host, which the Roman offertory uses for the chalice:

Concede nobis, Domine, quaesumus, ut haec hostia salutaris, et nostrorum fiat purgatio delictorum, et tuae propitiatio potestatis. Per Dominum.

Grant us, Lord, we beseech you, that this saving host may be the purification of our faults and the propitiation of your power. Through the Lord.

This similar prayer of the Gelasian also uses the term.

Protegat nos quaesumus Domine hostia salutaris, et quae ad honorem tui nominis immolatur, nobis prosit ad ueniam,

May the saving host protect us, we beseech you, Lord, and may that which is immolated to the honor of your name profit us for pardon.

The following also speaks of the sacrifice as present:

Sacrificiis praesentibus, quaesumus, Domine, placatus intende: ut et devotioni nostrae proficiant, et saluti.

Look graciously, we beseech you, Lord, upon these present sacrifices, that they may profit both our devotion and our salvation.

As for the *Suscipe, sancta Trinitas* of the offertory, we have already seen examples of the use of *oblato*. We also find other parallels among the *Secreta*: regarding the offering in honor of the saints and their intercession on our behalf, in the following *super oblata* of the Kiev fragment.

Munus hoc tibi, domine, oblatum per omnes sacras celestes virtutes et omnes sanctos tuos et iustos tuos sit tibi in laudem, nobis autem precibus illorum salutare reddatur.

May this gift, Lord, offered to you by all the holy heavenly virtues and by all your saints and your righteous ones, be for you unto praise, and by their prayers be made saving for us.

And in the Sacramentary of Fulda

Munera tibi domine nostre devotionis offerimus; quae et **pro omnium sanctorum tuorum** tibi sint grata **honore** et **nobis salutaria** te miserante reddantur, per.

We offer you, Lord, the gifts of our devotion; may they be pleasing to you for the honor of all your saints, and, having mercy on us, may they become salvation for us.

A Gelasian *secreta* expresses the same idea.

Presta nobis, quaesumus, omnipotens deus, ut nostrae humilitatis oblatio et pro tuorum grata sit honore sanctorum et nos corpore pariter et mente purificet,

Grant us, we beseech you, almighty God, that the oblation of our humility may be pleasing in honor of your saints, and may purify us alike in body and in mind.

A similar pattern is found in this prayer of the Gregorian.

Sacrificium tibi, domine, laudis offerimus in tuorum commemoratione sanctorum: da, quaesumus, ut quod illis contulit ad gloriam, nobis proficiat ad salutem.

We offer to you, Lord, a sacrifice of praise in the commemoration of your saints; grant, we beseech you, that what brought them glory may profit us for salvation.

On the feast of the Annunciation the oblation is offered explicitly in relation to the Incarnation and the Passion.

Accepta tibi sit quaesumus Domine haec oblatio plebis tuae quam offerimus hodie ob incarnationem simul et passionem redemptoris nostri Iesu Christi; te supplices deprecamur, ut placatus accipias. Per Dominum.

May this oblation of your people be accepted by you, we beseech you, Lord, which today we offer both for the Incarnation and for the Passion of our Redeemer Jesus Christ; we implore you as suppliants that, appeased, you may accept it. Through the Lord.

Finally, several prayers of the Gelasian and Gregorian traditions highlight the efficacy of the sacrifice.

Suscipe, domine, sacrificium, cuius te uoluisti dignanti immolatione placare; praesta, quaesumus, ut huius operatione mundati beneplacitum tibi nostrae mentis offeramus affectum,

Receive, Lord, the sacrifice with whose worthy immolation you willed to be appeased; grant, we beseech you, that, cleansed by the working of this sacrifice, we may offer to you the affection of our mind according to your good pleasure.

Huius sacrificii potentia, Domine, quaesumus, et vetustatem nostram abstergat et novitatem nobis augeat et salutem.

May the power of this sacrifice, Lord, we beseech you, wipe away our oldness, increase in us newness, and grant us salvation.

The phenomenon is not limited to the *Secretae*: in the Veronese Sacramentary we find, for example, this preface, which employs strongly sacrificial language.

Vere dignum: tuae laudis hostiam iugiter immolantes, cuius figuram Abel iustus instituit, agnus quoque legalis ostendit, celebravit Abraham, Melchisedech sacerdos exhibuit, sed verus agnus et aeternus pontifex hodie natus Christus implevit.

Truly it is worthy: continually immolating the host of your praise, whose figure the just Abel instituted, which the legal lamb also showed, Abraham celebrated, Melchizedek the priest offered; but the true Lamb and eternal High Priest, Christ born today, fulfilled.

The clearly recognizable presence of the anticipation of the offering of the sacrifice spoken of as already present in the *Secretae* of the most ancient sacramentaries obliges us to reconsider the attribution of prolepsis to the invasion of a post-Carolingian medieval liturgical conception.

Moreover, this “anticipation” is also present in the Roman Canon itself, in its first part, that is, before the consecration:

“...rogamus, ac petimus, uti accepta habeas et benedicas haec dona, haec munera, haec sancta sacrificia illibata, in primis quae tibi offerimus pro Ecclesia tua sancta catholica...”

“...we beseech and implore you to accept and bless these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unblemished sacrifices, which we first offer to you for your holy catholic Church...”

And afterwards:

Memento, Domine, famulorum famularumque tuarum N. et N., et omnium circumstantium (...) pro quibus tibi offerimus: vel qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis, pro se suisque omnibus: pro redemptione animarum suarum...

Remember, O Lord, your servants and handmaids N. and N., and all those present (...), for whom we offer to you, or who themselves offer to you, this sacrifice of praise, for themselves and all their own, for the redemption of their souls...

And afterwards:

« Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostrae, sed et cunctae familiae tuae, quaesumus, Domine, ut placatus accipias: diesque nostros in tua pace disponas, atque ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi, et in electorum tuorum iubeas grege numerari. »

Therefore, O Lord, we beseech you graciously to accept this oblation of our service, and of your whole family; order our days in your peace, deliver us from eternal damnation, and command that we be numbered in the flock of your elect.”

These prayers, which qualify as victim / oblation / sacrifice the realities of the bread and wine “not yet consecrated,” to which they explicitly refer by means of the demonstratives *hic / haec / hoc*, anticipate the sacrificial nature in the same way as will do the ritual section celebrated immediately before, namely, the offertory.

b. Prolepsis in the East

In the Eastern rites we likewise find frequent “anticipations” of the real presence which, in keeping with the style proper to these liturgical traditions, are not limited to words alone but are often translated as well into accompanying gestures and rites.

In the Byzantine rite, the preparation of the gifts and the offertory are situated from the outset within a clearly sacrificial context: before beginning the *proskomidia*, the priest recites the troparion of Good Friday, a brief hymn composed from a combination of biblical texts concerning redemption (Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 1:19; Jn 19:34):

“You have redeemed us from the curse of the Law by your most precious Blood. Nailed to the Cross and pierced by the lance, you cause a fountain of immortality to spring forth for mankind. O our Savior, glory to you.”

This sacrificial meaning is immediately and powerfully reinforced and made present when, during the complex preparation of the bread (highly evocatively called “the Lamb”), the lateral portions are cut while the words of the prophet announcing the sacrifice of the Suffering Servant are recited:

“As a sheep he was led to the slaughter; and as a spotless lamb before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was exalted. Who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth” (Is 53:7–8).

This same text is also used at the offertory by Armenians, Syrians, and Maronites; but unlike these, the Byzantine priest, while reciting it, cuts the “Lamb” with the “lance,” a liturgical implement proper to the Byzantine rite—a small knife shaped like a spear (in remembrance of the Passion)—and then adds:

“The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, is sacrificed for the life and salvation of the world” (cf. Jn 1:29).

He then pierces the left side of the “Lamb” with the lance, saying this formula:

“One of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who saw it has borne witness, and his witness is true” (Jn 19:34),

a formula which in this context acquires particular force, as it is accompanied by the pouring of wine and water into the chalice.

These same terms are also used, though without the dramatizing ceremony, by the Syriac, Chaldean, Malabar, and Armenian rites, and in the West by the Lyonese, Carthusian, Mozarabic, Ambrosian rites and that of the Church of Braga.

The Syro-Malabar Catholics (as also the Nestorians) prepare the chalice using an even stronger expression, which emphasizes prolepsis still more: *“The precious Blood is poured into the Chalice of Our Lord Jesus Christ...”*; they then also pour the water, saying: *“One of the soldiers...”* etc. When the bread is placed on the paten, it is said:

“May this paten be marked with the holy Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ...”

In the Roman rite, the preparation of the chalice does not have an anticipatory sense; rather, through the adaptation of an ancient prayer from the feast of Christmas, the symbolism of the union of water and wine is emphasized in order to underline the elevation of human nature accomplished by Christ, of whose divinity we ask to become sharers.

The Carmelite rite, like the Dominican, has no special prayer for the preparation of the chalice; in the latter, only *In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti* is said.

The Syriac rites, as in the West in the Dominican and Lyonese rites, recite verses from Psalm 116 during the offertory of the chalice: *Quid retribuam... calicem salutaris accipiam... — How shall I repay the Lord... I will take up the chalice of salvation...*

In the Coptic rite, the priest, holding the host in his hands, recites the offertory prayer, during which, after an apology acknowledging his unworthiness for so exalted a ministry, he implores:

“Grant us, O Lord, that our sacrifice may be accepted before you for my sins and for the ignorances of your people.”

He then performs the procession around the altar with the offerings, giving glory to God and asking for peace and the edification of the Church and of the offerers, while at the same time saying:

“Remember, O Lord, those who have brought these gifts before you and those for whom they have been brought. Grant us all the heavenly reward.”

At the Great Entrance, which in the Byzantine rite is invested with particular solemnity, the gifts are likewise treated as though Christ himself were present: the Greeks carry them in procession through the center of the nave (in some places the people prostrate themselves before the procession); the priest “blesses” the people with them, and then the choir sings, concluding the Cherubic Hymn:

“to receive the King of heaven and earth, invisibly accompanied by the legions of angels.”

In the Armenian rite, although the ceremony is not as developed (since the procession takes place within the sanctuary, passing behind the altar), there is likewise a proleptic character. At the beginning of the Entrance ceremony, the following hymn is always sung (also used in the Chaldean and Malabar rites, but only on Sundays), which likewise possesses a strongly anticipatory sense:

“The Body of the Lord and the Blood of the Savior are set before us; the heavenly hosts sing invisibly and say without ceasing: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts.”

When the deacon arrives before the priest, he says the words of Psalm 23 (vv. 7–10): *“Lift up your gates, O princes; be lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter!”*; and to the priest’s question, *“Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts,”* he responds: *“This is the King of glory!”* He then hands the chalice and paten to the celebrant, who blesses the people with them, saying: *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”*

In the Ethiopian rite, the priest carries out the procession bearing the hosts in a special basket placed upon his head, while the choir sings:

“You are the ark of purest gold in which is found the manna, the hidden bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the whole universe.”

The Syriac rite, during the so-called “service of Aaron,” that is, the offertory celebrated at the beginning of the Mass, includes a prayer comparable to the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* of the Latin rites mentioned above; within it are found the memorial of the work of redemption, the commemoration of all the saints pleasing to God “since the creation,” the commemoration of the dead, and, in a particular way, that of the offerers:

“We make memorial of Our Lord, our God and Savior Jesus Christ, and of all the work of redemption which he has accomplished for us: his Annunciation through an angel, his Nativity according to the flesh, his Baptism in the Jordan, his redeeming Passion, his Elevation on the Cross, his life-giving Death, his venerable Burial, his glorious Resurrection, his Ascension into Heaven, and his Session at the right hand of God the Father.

We commemorate over this Eucharist set before us (note here the very marked prolepsis), first of all our father Adam and our mother Eve, the holy Mother of God Mary, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Preachers, the Evangelists, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Just, the priests, the holy Fathers, the true Pastors, the orthodox doctors, the solitaries and the monks, those who pray with us and all those who, since the creation, have been pleasing to you, O Lord, from Adam and Eve until today.

We likewise make memorial of our fathers, of our brothers, of the teachers who have taught us the doctrine of truth, of our departed and of all the faithful departed, in particular and by name of those who are of our blood, of those who have participated or participate in the support of this place, and of anyone who is in communion with us, whether by word or by deed, in small things or in great; and in a very special way of N..., for whom this sacrifice is offered today. [Here the celebrant recalls the names of all those for whom he wishes to pray].”

In a similar way it is said in the Maronite rite:

“Sanctify this offering, and through it grant forgiveness of offenses and remission of sins to all those for whom it is offered: to me, to my relatives, to all the faithful who have labored and cooperated with me, whether living or already deceased...”

As may be observed, here too “anticipated” elements of the anaphora appear, in a manner similar to what occurs in the “minor canon,” that is, the Roman offertory.

In the Byzantine rite, this commemoration is carried out by placing beside the “Lamb” particles with which these commemorations are effected: first that of the Virgin, whose particle is placed to the right of the “Lamb” (with the words of Psalm 44:10, *“The Queen stands at your right hand...”*), then those of the saints, arranged in nine categories to the left of the Lamb; afterwards, particles are placed “beneath” the “Lamb,” where the commemorations of the living take place, beginning with ecclesiastical and civil authorities, then those of the departed, and finally that of the priest himself.

Conclusions

From the examples presented it follows that the proleptic offertory does not constitute an anomaly peculiar to medieval Western Christianity; this phenomenon is already present in some of the most

ancient euchological elements of the Roman rite and is widely developed in the rites of the East, even among those which had already broken communion with the rest of the Church in the fifth century.

We do not judge here the theological or sacramental implications of this fact, nor its scope, but limit ourselves to enumerating what we observe in the various rites examined. Nevertheless, it cannot fail to be noted that the remarkable extent of this phenomenon does not appear to be an undue anticipation of the sacrifice due to inattention, nor a deformation caused by the importation of elements belonging to a particular area or culture, but rather a coherent liturgical-theological logic, shared by East and West across the centuries, according to which the Eucharistic sacrifice is understood as a unitary act articulated in preparatory, oblationary, and consumptive phases. From this perspective, the sacrificial language employed before the anaphora does not designate a closed chronological moment within the celebration, but rather evokes the sacrifice as the intentional totality of the liturgical action.