

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

The One Priesthood of Jesus Christ



Faith – Liturgy – Life

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PRESENTATION

... a thousand years in Your eyes are merely a yesterday...

Ps 89:4

In an effort to look back down over the years, for the spirituality of priesthood I was much inspired by a variety of sources:

[A] The “Theological Places”, of Melchior Cano.

The lists may vary, but basically – in order to ponder a theological enterprise, it is necessary to contemplatively study the following sources:

[1] Divine Revelation, Oral and Written [cf. *Dei Verbum/ Verbum Domini*.

[2] Liturgy – Magisterium

[3] Fathers – Saints

[4] Traditions [small‘t’] – Expressions of Piety

[5] Theologians – Monuments – Art

[6] Philosophy – Literature – Culture – Politics

[7] Sociology

[B] Sources of Faith’s Growth [Vocation [DV 8]

[1] Contemplation

[2] Study

[3] Magisterium

[4] Experience

[C] Pillars of Formation

[1] Human

[2] Intellectual

[3] Spiritual

[4] Pastoral

[D] St Thomas' Characteristics of Christian Hope

- [1] Future**
- [2] Good**
- [3] Difficult**
- [4] Possible**

The PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST and Our Share in it.

... you are a Holy Priesthood to offer the spiritual sacrifices made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... [1 P 2:5].

...God] did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all... [Rm 8:32]

...For God so loved the world that He gave [up] His only Son ... [Jn 3:16]

... I urge you, therefore, brothers by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Do not conform yourself to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect... [Rm 12:1, 2]

...Put on the mind of Christ Jesus though equal to God...He emptied Himself...Because of this, God greatly exalted Him... [cf. Ph 2:5-11].

... the two become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church... [Ep 5:32].

Presentation

The reflection on the Priesthood over these many years has often come to me through a series of Triads, as: **King, Priest Prophet – Leader, Minister, Teacher¹**. In the world of labor, there is **apprentice – journey-man- master**. And in the spiritual life, there three Ways: **Purgative – Illuminative – Unitive**. It may also be considered in the light of the Sacrament of Holy Order, there are three commitments made: **obedience, simplicity of life, celibacy**. All of this is in response to the call of the Trinity, **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**, through **Faith, Hope and Love**.

Here we will offer an analogy of faith based on a triad offered by of Pope-emeritus, Benedict XVI, and his recent Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Eucharist, ***Sacramentum Caritatis*²: A Mystery to be Believed; A Mystery to be Celebrated; a Mystery to be Lived**. The Priesthood of Jesus Christ may also be thought of as: **Offertory – Consecration – a Holy Communion, or Sacramental Brotherhood [PO 8]**. These triads in the priestly life may be seen as so many links connecting **the Priest to the Trinity, to the Paschal Mystery, to the Eucharist**, comparable perhaps to the chain of the Rosary linked to the

¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium. Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community*. Vatican City March 19, 1999.

² Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *The Sacrament of Charity [Sacramentum Caritatis]*, Vatican City. February 21, 2007.

Crucifix, with the repeated trilogy of the **Lord's Prayer**, the **Angelic Salutation** and the **Doxology**, as each of us lives out fully the **joyful, sorrowful** and **glorious** mysteries of our own lives. This reflection will make an analogy between the **Offertory, Consecration** and **Holy Communion** of the Eucharist to the Life of the Priest today. In the life-long ascent of **Horeb, Sinai** and the spiritual **Sion** - many scholars believe we all need to pass through the **Purgative, Illuminative** and **Unitive** stages³.



I. OFFERTORY

The Priesthood of Jesus Christ: A Mystery to be believed – A Daily Liturgy of Apostolic Faith

In the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul II wrote his annual Holy Thursday Letter to Priests from the Cenacle in the Holy Land, in which he said:

Today, this visit to the Upper Room gives me an opportunity to survey the entire mystery of the Redemption. It was here that Christ gave us the immense gift of the Eucharist. Here, too, our Priesthood was born...

This unique reality may help the Faithful to understand how it is that we can use the same language [**Offertory, Consecration, Communion**] to describe both Sacraments, that of the **Eucharist** and that of the **Priesthood**. By a continuing analogy of Faith, it seems fair to see these terms within the Mystery of God, and the Call addressed to us all.

God, the Father: as a kind of 'biblical inclusion' the first author of the New Testament and the last, come together in their understanding of the Father's role in the Incarnation:

... He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? [Rm 8:32].
... For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life... [Jn 3:16].

³ Fr. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life. Prelude of Eternal Life*. Rockford IL. 2 Volumes: TAN

The scholars remind us that it was Origen who notes a connection with this Old Testament verse:

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only [monogeneis] son [agapetos], I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore... [Gn 22:16, f.].*

This is the Father's version of being **God is Love** [1 Jn 4, 8, 16]⁴ loving 'with all His heart'.

Jesus, Merciful High Priest: from the Prologue of the IVth Gospel, we read that the **Word was in God's presence ... ever at the Father's side...** [Jn1:1, 18]... close to the Father's heart. This is understood by scholars as a dynamic accompaniment, indicating on the one hand, stable localization, pre-creation and eternal accompaniment, before the constitution of the world [Jn 7:29; 17:5: the Father knows where He came from]. Then it clearly means eternal filial relationship, motion towards God⁵. By priestly ordination, a man participates specifically in the Priesthood of Christ in a sacramental identification, the priest being inserted into the Trinitarian Mystery and that of Church service⁶. The Priest of today is called by God [cf. Ps 2; 110] to share in Christ's own Filiation, by Adoption⁷

In the Trinity, everything is one and the same **where there is no opposition of relationship**⁸. In our efforts to shed some light on the Priesthood through the Eucharist, seeing that **God is Love**, the God the Son shows His unique love as loving obedience [*My food is the Father's will* – Jn 4:31, ff.; cf. also Jn 5:19, ff.; 6:35, ff.; 8:53, ff.; 12:49, ff.; 13; Ph 2:5-11; 10:7, ff.].

⁴ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas est*. December 25, 2005.

⁵ R. Brown, *The Gospel of John I-XII*, Vol. 29. Anchor Yale Bible [Doubleday] 1966, pp. 4, ff., 17.

⁶ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*. Vatican City. January 31, 1994.

⁷ Blessed Dom Columba Marmion, OSB, is the Teacher of Divine filiation, *par excellence*. Cf. his *Christ, the Life of the Soul*. Translated by Alan Bancroft. Bethesda: Zacchaeus Press 2005. Cf. also *Christ The Ideal of the Priest*. San Francisco: Ignatius 2005

⁸ Council of Florence, Decree for Jacobites. D-S 1330.

This '**Constitutional Filiation**' of the Divine Son, has been pointed out by the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, as a privileged expression of His **constant prayer**.⁹ Christ's **Agony in the Garden** shows this teaching in act – a sublime reflection in itself¹⁰. In the volume of the Advent **Liturgy of the Hours**, much can be gained by reading again Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Constitution, **Canticum Laudis**, and the **General Instruction**, on the Prayer of Christ continued across the ages in the Church.¹¹

The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers¹² is presented to the Church in the divine inspiration of the New Testament **Document to the Hebrews** :¹³ **... every high priest... acts for men in their relations to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices ...** [Heb 5:1, ff.]. This image of an existential, lived, experienced Priestly **Oblation** inspires Vatican II with the image of **martyrdom** which transforms one into the image of the Master, Who 'manifested His charity by laying down His life for us... [LG 42]. This **oblative spirituality**¹⁴ of self-giving constitutes the natural **Filiation of Jesus Christ**.

A renowned Dominican theologian of the World War II years at the ANGELICUM was a Fr. M. M. Matthijs, OP¹⁵. In speaking of the Blessed in heaven, noted that by a 'certain redundancy', those in glory have been elevated to **conform to Him in glory**. They are constituted in their eternal mind-set of the sacrifices of life. In listing the reasons why the Stigmata was retained in His glorious body, St. Thomas notes ... **fourthly, that He may convince those redeemed in His blood, how mercifully they have been helped, as He**

⁹ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *The Pierced One*. Ignatius 1986.

¹⁰ A. Feuillet, *L'agonie de Gethsemani*. Paris: Gabalda 1977.

¹¹ Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution, *Canticum Laudis*, November 1, 1970.

¹² André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers*, Translated by M.J. O'Connell. Garden City NY: Doubleday 1975.

¹³ Cf. Celsus Spicq, OP, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*. Paris: Gabalda 1952, 1953 [2 Volumes]. Cf. also Albert Vanhoye, SJ, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest, according to the New Testament*. Petersham MA: St. Bede's Publications 1986.

¹⁴ Cf. Albert Vanhoye, SJ, 'L'oblazione di Gesù sacerdote', in: *Spiritualità oblative riparatrice*. Bologna EDB 1989, pp. 57-75, *passim*.

¹⁵ M. M. Matthijs, OP, *De aeternitate sacerdotii Christi et de Unitate sacrificii Crucis et Altaris*. Roma: Pontificia Studiorum Universitas a S. Thoma Aq. In Urbe 1962, p. 43.

exposes before them the traces of the same death ‘ (Bede on Lk 24:40)].¹⁶
 For the Pilgrim Church, the author again quotes St. Thomas: ...**The sacrifice which is offered every day in the Church is not distinct from that which Christ Himself offered, but it is a commemoration thereof...**¹⁷

The **Apocalypse** reveals a **Liturgy forever with the Sacrificial Lamb** – the **Passover** is noted, the **Ingathering, Festival of Tabernacles**, the twilight years of life, all celebrated in the Immolated Lamb – this also celebrates the Eternity of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Visionary sees a ... **door open ... Come up here, I will show you what is to come in the future ... there was a rainbow... Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord...** [Rv 4:1-11] - ... **The Lamb that seemed to have been sacrificed, came forward to take the scroll ... You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals ...** [Rv 5:1-4]. The autumnal celebration of **Booths** for the Thanksgiving harvest is celebrated in Rv 7: ... **all before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches ...** The eternal vision is one of Priestly Offertory of Self.

God, the Holy Spirit comes as **Gift** as noted in the dialogue with the Woman of Samaria, often symbolized in the running, fresh water: **if you only knew the Gift of God ...** He is the Lord, and **giver of new life**.

The Blessed Virgin Mary becomes the Mother and type of the Church in her response to God's Word. Her life is one like the Beloved in the Song of Songs: ***Draw me after You...!*** [Ct 1:4]. St. Thomas¹⁸ treats beautifully of Mary's ***Fiat***:

He teaches us that indeed it was most reasonable that it should be announced to her that she was to conceive Christ:

- firstly, in order to maintain a becoming order in the union of the Son of God with the Virgin – namely, that she should be **informed in mind** concerning Him, before conceiving Him in the flesh. St. Augustine is called to bear witness here: Mary is more blessed in receiving the faith of Christ, than in conceiving the flesh of Christ. Her nearness as a Mother would have been of no profit to Mary, had she not borne Christ in her heart after a more blessed manner than in her flesh;

¹⁶ St. Thomas, Summa III, q. 54, a. 4 c.

¹⁷ III, q.22, a. 3, ad 2 um.

¹⁸ III q. 30, aa. 1-4.

- secondly, that she might be **a certain witness** of this mystery being instructed therein by God;
- thirdly, that she might **offer to God the free gift of her obedience**¹⁹: which she proved herself right ready to do: *Behold, the handmaid of the Lord*;
- fourthly, in order to show that there is **a certain spiritual espousals** between the Son of God and human nature. So, in the Annunciation, the Virgin's consent was besought in place of that of the entire human race.

The Church: in imitation of her Founder, and following the example of her Mother, the **Church is called to self-giving** in accord with **Mark's concept of discipleship**²⁰:

...and his mother and his brethren came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting about him; and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brethren are outside, asking for you.' And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brethren?' And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brethren! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother...' [Mk 3:31, ff.] .

Vatican II, in its turn, offers helpful formulae for all who believe:

...The 'obedience of faith' [Rm 16:26; cf. Lk 1:5; 2Co 10:5-6] must be given to God, who reveals, an obedience by which one entrusts his entire self freely to God, 'offering the full submission [obsequium] of intellect and will to God who reveals [Vatican I] and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him ... **[DV 5]**.

This is presented in a slightly different format by **LG 25**:

...the faithful, for their part, are obliged to submit to their bishops' decision, made in the name of Christ, in matters of faith and morals, and to adhere to it with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind. This loyal submission [obsequium] of will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* ...

Conclusion: St. Paul long ago had reminded the early church through his pastoral letters, that all of the Christian life is a liturgy²¹:

¹⁹ The Latin reads here: ... *ut voluntaria sui obsequii munera Deo offeret...*

²⁰ John H. Donahue, SJ, *The Theology and Setting of the Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*. The 1983 Père Marquette Theology Lectures. Marquette Press 1983, pp. 2, ff., 31, 46.

²¹ Raymond Corriveau, CSsR, *The Liturgy of Life. A Study of the Ethical Thought of St. Paul in his Letters to the Early Christian Communities*. Paris/Montreal: Desclee/ Editions Bellarmin. 1970, pp. 155-185, *passim* - [for Romans]

*I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice [obsequium], holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world * but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. [Rm 12: 1, ff.]*



II. CONSECRATION

The Priesthood of Jesus Christ: A Mystery to be Celebrated –

A Daily Liturgy of Filial Hope

Jesus Himself describes His personal Mission from the Father as **being consecrated and sent into this world** [Jn 10:36] - and later, His handing on His Mission to the Apostles is also described as their **consecration**, flowing from His own [Jn 17: 18, ff.]²². As the Evangelists and New Testament writers offer us a varied communication of Jesus Christ, so also the artist offers his conception of the culminating mystery of Christ's life, and entrance into heaven at the resurrection. The ICON of San Damiano is usually 'contemplated' from the bottom up, and reaches Christ stepping into the eternal Communion of Saints at the top, Who is being raised up [on the Cross, in the Resurrection, through the Ascension], and **drawing all to Himself** [cf. Jn 12:32].

We are all called to become 'New Men' in the Church, this is the constant vocation from the glorified Christ, as seen in St. Paul: **be intent on the things above ... your life is hidden now with Christ in God ... you will appear with Him in glory... put on the New Man, the one who grows in the knowledge, as he is formed anew in the image of his Creator ...** [Col 3: 1, ff.]. Once the side of Christ is opened this is the Tabernacle Door of the Trinity, from which flow blood and water, early seen in the Church as Baptism and Eucharist [cf. Jn 19: 31, ff.; 1 Jn 5:6, ff.]. This is the birth of the New Eve [cf. Gn 2: 21, ff.], drawn from the side of the New Adam in his sleep of death on the Cross. This is the door in the New Ark of the Covenant [cf. Gn 6:16], the new Gate of Heaven, or

²² Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, *La vérité dans saint Jean. Le croyant et la vérité*. Rome: PIB 1977, pp. 706-787, *passim*.

for the flock to pass through [cf. Jn 10:1, ff.]. Only the Immolated Lamb can open the scrolls of Sacred Scripture [cf. Rv 5:1, ff.] and as we read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

112 1. Be especially attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture." Different as the books which comprise it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover.

The phrase "heart of Christ" can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.²³

113 2. Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church." According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture ("according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church").

114 3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith. By "analogy of faith" we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

In the ICON of San Damiano, we are invited to ponder the rainbow and ***praise its Maker, so superbly beautiful in its splendor. Across the sky it forms a glorious arc, drawn by the hands of the Most High*** ... [Si 43:11]. This contemplation in color is like a pre-view of coming attractions, something like a glimpse into the Beatific Vision, a window into the Trinity, a mirror for Christianity.

The priestly call, as for all Christians is to imitate the Christ within, to follow by imitating, to struggle to put on the mind of Christ Jesus [Ph 2:5]. The sacrifice of Christ is the ultimate proof of the love of God for us all:

20* I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me... [Ga 2]

Follow Christ ... by loving ... giving Himself up ... [Ep 5:2, 25].

The message of the ICON of San Damiano to St. Francis was: **Go, and Repair My Church!** This is our vocation: to build up the People of God. The

²³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. In Ps 21, 11*. Cf. Ps 22:15.

cloud of witnesses [cf. Heb 11] remind us of the fulfillment of the prophecy to Abraham: as numerous as the sands of the sea, and the stars of the sky! [cf. Gn 22:17; 32: 13]. This is a glimpse of some of the 144,000 [cf. Rv 14:1, ff.] who have washed their garments in the blood of the grape [cf. Gn 49:11], of the Lamb! [cf. Rv 7:14].

Some of the Lessons from San Damiano could be to notice the **border of shells**: the shell made a useful spoon for nourishment, viaticum, in order to drink from the 'streams of salvation' [cf. Is 12: 1, ff.] – and a cup for the waters of Baptism²⁴. In ancient China, a symbol of good fortune. Within the shell, there is a haven of life, of survival, in the frightening storms in the sea [cf. Gn 1:3, ff.]. It served as protection of the precious pearl, indicating a kind of **nuptial harmony**, protective of new life. As Peter was fearful in the awful storm at sea, the Lord rebuked him: **Where is your faith?** [cf. Lk 8:22, ff.]. The shell can survive in the depths of the stormy sea.²⁵

The **tapping of the stone** from which water flowed that saved the life in the desert [cf. Ex 17:1, ff.] is interpreted by St. Paul to be Jesus Himself:

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same supernatural food 4 and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ... [1 Co 10].

The Cock: this is found only on careful analysis with an enlarged reproduction of the ICON. The cock has long been associated with St. Peter, and his denial of the Lord three times [cf. Mt 26:74; Mk 14:27; Lk 22: 33; Jn 14:27]. However, the crow of the cock means the coming of the **New Day of the Lord**, the true mystical soul waits on the Lord, as the sentinel waits for the dawn [cf. Ps 130:6]. Before the day star, Melchisedek is born [cf. Ps 110] – the Risen Lord, the Spouse of the Church, comes forth like the **new dawn** [cf. Ct 6:10].

²⁴ Cf. C. H. Appleton, *Symbolism in Liturgical Art*. NY: Scribners 1959, pp. 88, ff.

²⁵ cf. J. E. Cirlot, *Dictionary of Symbols*. NY: Philosophy Library 1962, pp. 152, f.

Two small figurines stepping up: the one under Christ's left arm seems to be the anonymous 'someone', even though he misunderstood the nature of Christ's thirst, he stuck a sponge in the jar of ordinary wine and offered it to the Crucified, to slake the thirst of Christ on the Cross [cf. Jn 19:28, ff.] – in response to this, water seems to run freely through John's gospel: Cana of Galilee, **the 6 jars** become 'the best wine' [c. 2] – Jesus' dialogue with the Woman of Samaria by **Jacob's Well** [Jn 4] – then, the last and greatest day of the **festival of water** [c. 7] – and most sublimely, **the opening of the side of Christ** [c. 19] . This leads us to the second figurine on the other side of the Lord, both imitating Christ presented in the medallion on top, stepping up. Tradition calls this soldier 'Longinus', perhaps the name is derived from the Greek rendition of 'spear', or 'lance'. He is under the wound depicted on Christ's right hand side, perhaps in harmony with the New Temple predicted by Ezechiel [47:1, ff.]. Both these figures are stepping upward, inviting all **to look on the One they have pierced!** [Jn 19:37]. The praying of this ICON is part of the process of being 'raised up' with Jesus on the Cross, in the resurrection [cf. Jn 3:13, ff.; 6:62; 8:28; 20:17].

There are **two major figures under Christ's right arm:** Mary His Mother and John the Beloved Disciple [cf. Jn 19]. They are **re-presentative** personalities for the Church. Under the left arm, there is **Mary Magdalen, Mary, the Wife of Clopas²⁶, and the Centurion** [cf. Mt 8: 5, ff.; Lk 7:1-10] **whose son was healed by the Lord: by Whose wounds, ours are healed** [cf. Is 53:5; 1 P 2:21-14]. **Adoring Angels** are pictured above Jesus' two bleeding hands, and above the top medallion, where Jesus steps into the Communion of Saints – His blood is the price of our copious redemption [cf. 1 P 1:19].

The declaration of the universality Kingship of Jesus Christ in three of the broader used languages [Jn 19:20] in the known world. Fr. Raymond Brown ²⁷ shows that John has less interest in the Kingdom of God, but much more in

²⁶ cf. J.B. Daniels, 'Clopas', in: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. NY: Doubleday 1992, Vol. I, p. 1066.

²⁷ Raymond E. Brown, SS, *The Gospel According to John, 1-12,13-21. Introduction, Translation and Notes*. Two Volumes. Garden City NY: Doubleday [1966; 1970], *passim*, pp. cx, ff.; 234, f.; 249, f.; 851-854; 863; 912, ff.; 959, ff. 1030, f.; 1078.

Jesus Who is King. This is so particularly in Christ's dialogue with Pilate where He makes clear that ***His Kingdom is not of this world*** [Jn 18: 33-38].

St. Paul repeatedly makes known the total Self-giving of Christ [cf. Ga 2:20; Ep 5:2, 25], and the more integral formula: ... 3* ***Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4* who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; 5* to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen...*** [Ga 1; cf. also 1 Tm 2:6; Tt 2:11-14].

One summary we might draw from our contemplation of the Icon of San Damiano is that the Cross of Jesus Christ: is the **Throne** for Christ the **King**; the **Altar** for Christ the Merciful High **Priest**; the **Pulpit** for Christ as **Preacher**; and the **Podium** for Christ as **Sage**, or **Teacher**.



A HOLY COMMUNION

The Priesthood of Jesus Christ: A Mystery to be Lived –

A Daily Liturgy of Fraternal Communion, Pastoral Charity

Vatican II speaks relatively frequently about the **bonds of intimate brotherhood [LG 28]** of those sharing with the Bishop in **the one priesthood of Christ [CD 28]** those consecrated in the order of Priesthood by the Sacrament of orders are bound together by **an intimate sacramental brotherhood [PO 8]** Pastoral charity urges all priests to **act within this communion [PO 15]**.

In the early years of the turbulent 20th century, Martin Buber put together his classic ***I and Thou***²⁸, re-printed many times, **showing** how humanity persists and thrives on healthy relationships – a concept St. Thomas and others, earlier had used to describe personality within the Trinity²⁹. The deep union of Christ with His Father is eloquently brought forward in the Prologue of John, ***the Word***

²⁸ Martin Buber, ***I and Thou. A New Translation with a Prologue and Notes by Walater Kaufmann***, New York/London/ Toronto Sydney: Simon & Schuster. Touchstone Edition 1996.

²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, Part One, **q. 28, aa. 1-4**, on the Divine Relations. **Q. 40, aa. 1-4**, the Persons compared to Relations.

was in God's presence... He was present with God ... ever at God's side... – ever turning toward Him, as was noted above. During Christ's culminating moments of His earthly sojourn, St. Luke puts this 'mind' of Christ in these terms: ... **Jesus resolutely turned [fixed] His face towards Jerusalem...** [Lk 9:51]. In the end, **obedience unto death on the Cross** is the sublime mystery of the Christological Hymn of Jesus, Ph 2:5-11³⁰. This is **the mind** of Christ Jesus. Fr. Von Balthasar used the image of a 'form' for soft cement, that would harden shaped by the form into a highway, or side-walk – in this sense, Jesus is **in-formed** by the Father's Will, and each priest needs to be **in-formed** by the Merciful, Faithful and Eternal High Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

There is a good insight into Trinitarian Union as the source of Priestly vocation³¹. In our understanding of the 'constitutional identity' of the Priest, his 'ontology', here much use is made of Eucharistic terminology.

There is much interest in the modern Church magisterium for **Communion within the Church**. The scope of its document was meant to shed some light after the Synod of Bishops of 1985.³² Within the Ecclesial Communion, the Bishops are called to a specific role. John Paul inculcated this with his **Apostolos Suos**³³. Here the Pope teaches that the Lord assembled a permanent assembly, a 'college' Paul VI wrote a *Motu Proprio*, **Ecclesiae Sanctae** [1966], an exercise in international episcopal Conferences.

The Laity too were blessed with their own Documents. Paul VI promulgated his Apostolic Exhortation, **Familiaris Consortio, The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World**. This was published on the Feast of Christ the King, November 22, 1981. He noted that in the communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the Revelation and faith

³⁰ R. P. Martin, *An Early Christian Confession, Ph 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation*. London 1960; Jozef HERIBAN, *retto phronein e kenosis. Studio esegetico su Fil 2:1-5, 6-11*. Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose 51. Roma: LAS 1983.

³¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry of and Life of Priests*. Vatican City: January 31, 1994, Chapter I, §§ 3-5, Trinitarian Dimensions in Identity of the Priest.

³² Joseph Card. Ratzinger, *Notio Communio. Lettera e Commenti*. Cong. per Dottrina della Fede. Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1994.

³³ John Paul II, *Motu Proprio, Apostolos Suos*. On the Theological and Juridical Nature of the Episcopal Conferences. Ascension, May 21, 1993.

experience of Israel, finds a meaningful expression in the marriage Covenant which is established between a man and a woman [# 12]. John Paul II wrote his Post-Synodal Exhortation, ***Christi Fideles Laici***, on December 30, 1988, regarding the Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Life of the Church as **Communion**. Mission and Communion are profoundly connected here.

John Paul II also wrote an Exhortation to Religious: ***Congregavit nos in unum*** on February 2, 1994. This document, as would be expected is structured around living in common: this is a gift that is part of God's plan that He wishes to share His life in common; it is the place of becoming brothers and sisters; and finally, as the place of Mission.

This panoramic plan of union the Church then depends also on the emphasis of the **sacramental bonding of priests as brothers** [PO 8].

Conclusion

...You are a holy priesthood, to offer the spiritual sacrifices made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... [1 P 2:5].

While the Priesthood of Jesus Christ is one, there are two different ways to share in it as is clear in the teaching of Vatican II:

AA 3. The laity derive the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself. They are **consecrated into a royal priesthood and a holy people** [cf. 1 P 2:4-10] in order that they may offer spiritual sacrifices through everything they do, and may witness to Christ throughout the world. For their part, the sacraments, especially the most holy Eucharist, communicate and nourish that charity which is the soul of the entire apostolate.

PO 2: Cooperation in the Different Participations in Christ's Priesthood

"The Lord Jesus 'whom the Father has made holy and sent into the world' [Jn 10:36], has made His whole Mystical Body share in the anointing by the Spirit with which He Himself has been anointed. **For in Him all the faithful are made a holy and royal priesthood**. They offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, and they proclaim the perfections of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Hence, there is no member who does not have a part in the mission of the whole Body. Rather, each one ought to hallow Jesus in his heart and bear witness to Jesus in the spirit of prophecy...

"Inasmuch as it is connected with the episcopal order, the priestly office shares in the authority by which Christ Himself builds up, sanctifies and rules His Body. Therefore, while it indeed presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, the sacerdotal office of priests is conferred by that special sacrament through which priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are marked with **a special character** and are so **configured** to Christ the Priest that they can act in the person of Christ the Head...

The share or men who receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders in the ministerial priesthood of Christ is thus presented:

PO 8 a, b, d, e:

"All priests who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Orders are bound together by an **intimate sacramental brotherhood**; but in a special way, they form **one priestly body** in the diocese to which they are **attached** under their own bishop. For even though they may be assigned to different duties, yet they **fulfill the one priestly service** for people. Indeed all priests are sent to **cooperate in the same work**... They all contribute to the same purpose, namely the building up of the body of Christ, and this, especially in our times, demands many kinds of duties and fresh adaptations.

"For this reason, it is of great importance that all priests, whether diocesan or regular, should help each other, so that they may be **fellow-helpers of the truth** [cf. 3 Jn 8]. Each is joined to the rest of the members of **this priestly body by special ties of apostolic charity of ministry and of brotherhood**. This is signified liturgically from ancient times by the fact that the priests present at an ordination are invited to impose hands, and when priests concelebrate the sacred Eucharist in a spirit of harmony. So priests are **all united with their brother priests by the special bond of charity, prayer, and total cooperation**. In this way is shown forth that unity with which Christ willed his own to be perfected in one, that the world might know that the Son had been sent by the Father [cf. Jn 17:23]...

...Finally, because of the same **brotherly bond of priesthood** priests ought to realize that they have an obligation towards those laboring under difficulties. They should offer timely help to them, even by discreetly warning them where necessary. They ought always to treat with fraternal charity and compassion those who have failed in certain ways." They should pray earnestly to God for them and never cease to show themselves **genuine brothers and friends to them**."

This is the goal – and this is the reality – that we nourish in each Eucharist the bond of brotherhood among us, in our fulfillment of Jesus' own Priestly Prayer for the Church: Christ, our Merciful High Priest:

11 And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one... [Jn 17]

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