

CURES OF THE SOUL AND CORRECTION OF HEART Pope Leo the Great on the Healing Power of Holy Week

~ J. Mark Armitage ~

The idea of “sacrament” or “mystery” (*sacramentum*; *mysterium*) and “example” (*exemplum*) is fundamental to the patristic understanding of the redeeming power of Scripture and liturgy. Explaining the way in which the Fathers of the Church employ these terms, Pope Benedict XVI writes:

By *sacramentum* they mean, not any particular sacrament, but rather the entire mystery of Christ—his life and death—in which he draws close to us, enters us through his Spirit, and transforms us. But precisely because this *sacramentum* truly “cleanses” us, renewing us from within, it also unleashes a dynamic of new life. The command to do as Jesus did is no mere moral appendix to the mystery, let alone an antithesis to it. It follows from the inner dynamic of gift with which the Lord renews us and draws us into what is his.¹

Characteristically Augustinian,² this dynamic of *sacramentum* and *exemplum* lies, as Philip Barclift has shown, at the heart of Pope Leo the Great’s soteriology.³ For Leo, the terms *sacramentum* and *mysterium* are interchangeable. Both refer to “mysteries” understood liturgically, and to “mysteries” understood soteriologically as the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. For Leo, liturgy is a “mystery” in which past events are not just remembered but rendered sacramentally and efficaciously present.⁴ Operating at the level of *mysterium* and *exemplum*, the mysteries of the nativity, passion, and exaltation of Christ are recapitulated in the liturgy and in the Church in such a way that the members of the Mystical Body partake in the mysteries undergone by the Head.⁵ *Sacramentum* and *mysterium* are also interchangeable with *remedium*, which is again coupled with *exemplum*: “unless

- 1 Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 62.
- 2 Basil Studer, “*Sacramentum et Exemplum* chez saint Augustin,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975): 87–141.
- 3 Philip L. Barclift, *Pope Leo’s Soteriology: Sacramental Recapitulation* (Unpublished dissertation, Marquette University, 1992).
- 4 Jean Gaillard, “Noël, memoria ou mystère,” *Maison-Dieu* 59 (1959): 37–59; Marie-Bernard de Soos, “Présence du mystère du salut dans la liturgie d’après saint Léon,” *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 73 (1959): 116–135.
- 5 Philip L. Barclift, *Pope Leo’s Soteriology*, 243.

Christ were true God, he would not bring us a remedy; unless he were true man, he would not offer us an example.”⁶ The interchangeability of *sacramentum*, *mysterium* and *remedium* suggests that the paschal mystery is to be understood as operating therapeutically—a theme which I intend to develop during the course of this study. As mysteries and remedies, the events of Christ’s life effect a healing transformation in the human nature assumed by the Word. As examples, they model the recapitulation (Barclift’s term) by the faithful of the various phases of that transformation. This recapitulation is in turn empowered by the liturgical *memoria* and *mysterium* of Christ’s saving *sacramenta*, and by the *mysteria* of baptism and the Eucharist, in such wise that faith and liturgy are translated into human living.⁷

In his preaching Leo generally begins with the “narration of the gospel” (*evangelica narratio*),⁸ the “narration of the gospel reading,”⁹ the “narration from the scriptures,”¹⁰ in virtue of which the minds of the faithful are inspired to wonder and their hearts are raised on high (a reference to the *sursum corda* of the Eucharistic Prayer).¹¹ The “narration of the gospel” is followed by a combination of scriptural exegesis, doctrinal exposition, and, finally, exhortation to an amendment of life which will give expression to the mystery being celebrated, and which may take the form of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, moral renewal, fighting against demons, upholding doctrinal orthodoxy, and ascetic endeavor.¹² The threefold schema—scripture, doctrine, asceticism—is sketched out in the introduction to *Tr* 71 (on the resurrection). It is, explains Leo, by “our participation in the cross of Christ” that “the very life of believers contains in itself the mystery of Easter (*paschale sacramentum*).” Moreover, “what is honored at the feast is celebrated by our practice,” and “we should feel something of the cross (*aliquid sentiremus crucis*) in the time of the Lord’s passion.” In this way “we must strive to be found partak-

6 *Tr* 21.2. For Leo’s sermons, abbreviated as *Tr* (*Tractatus*), I have used the critical edition of Antoine Chavasse, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, vols. 128 and 128A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1973). For the letters, abbreviated as *Ep* (*Epistolae*) I have used the Ballerini edition in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier and J. P. Migne, 1844–1864), vol. 54. Translations are my own. I have consulted the translations by Charles Lett Feltoe in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 12, ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895, reprint 1989), and by Sr. Jane Patricia Freeland and Sr. Agnes Josephine Conway in the *Fathers of the Church* series, vol. 93 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1986).

7 See D. Antonio Piloni, La “fides Christiana” nelle opere di S. Leone Magno dalla “celebratio fidei” alla “vita credentium” (per una teologia della celebrazione) (Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1985).

8 *Tr* 38.1.

9 *Tr* 36.1.

10 *Tr* 35.2.

11 *Tr* 67.1.

12 Leo explores these themes in more detail in his sermons for the Lenten and other fast seasons. See J. Mark Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity: Leo the Great’s Theology of Redemption*, Early Christian Studies 9 (Strathfield, Australia: St Pauls Publications, 2005), 153–168.

ers (*consortes*) also of Christ's resurrection, and, while we are in this body, to pass over from death to life."¹³ In the present study I wish to examine one particular aspect of "our participation in the cross of Christ"—namely, our participation in the interconnected mysteries of the agony in the garden of Gethsemane and of the cry of dereliction on Calvary—and to sketch out some of the ways in which Leo's exegesis of the relevant passages of liturgically occurring scripture enables us to "feel something of the cross," to recapitulate the *paschale sacramentum*, to share in the healing *remedium* of Christ's death and resurrection, and to "pass over" with him from death to life.

Freedom from Fear

In his sermon on the transfiguration,¹⁴ Leo tells how, on the road to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks the apostles who they think he is, and Peter answers "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁵ Anxious lest the apostles "should believe that human nature was glorified in him in such a way that he could neither suffer punishment nor be dissolved in death," Jesus proceeds to tell them of his forthcoming passion, death, and resurrection.¹⁶ Peter rejects the idea that Jesus might suffer and die, but is "corrected by a kindly reproach from Jesus," and "animated with the desire of participating in his passion."¹⁷ Jesus instills into the "that they who wished to follow him should deny themselves, and, in the hope of eternal things, consider the loss of temporal things unimportant, because only those who do not fear to lose their soul for Christ can achieve its salvation."¹⁸ Desiring "that the apostles might embrace with their whole heart this happy and constant courage without trembling at the harshness of taking up the cross," Jesus leads Peter, James, and John up a mountain and reveals to them the "kingly brilliance" (*regia claritas*) of "the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom."¹⁹ According to Leo, Christ's primary object in the transfiguration was "to remove the scandal of the cross from the hearts of the disciples, so that the faith of those to whom the excellence of his hidden dignity had been revealed might not be upset by the lowliness of his voluntary passion."²⁰ His second object was to establish "the foundation ... of the holy Church's hope"

13 Tr 71.1.

14 This sermon was delivered in Lent, 445. See Bernard Green, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008), 182–186; Elena Cavalcanti, "The Sermon of Leo the First on the Transfiguration (*Serm LI* Chavasse)," *Studia Patristica* 38 (2001): 371–376.

15 Matt. 16:16.

16 Tr 51.2.

17 Tr 51.2.

18 Tr 51.2.

19 Tr 51.2. The reference is to Matthew 16:28. Leo's thought echoes that of Hilary of Poitiers in *De Trinitate* (On the Trinity) 11, 37 (*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, vol. 62A, 565; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 9, 213–214). See Green, *Soteriology*, 183.

20 Tr 51.3.

in such a way that “the whole Body of Christ might acknowledge exactly what sort of change was to be bestowed upon it, and that the members might promise themselves a fellowship in that honor which had already shone forth in their Head.”²¹ Leo adduces a catena of biblical quotations in favor of this idea that the members of Christ’s Mystical Body can take hope and courage from the glory of the Head manifested in the transfiguration: “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father;”²² “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us;”²³ “for you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”²⁴

Leo emphasizes that we have no choice but to follow the way of the cross if we wish to share in Christ’s glory:

Although we ought not to entertain any doubt about the promises of happiness, nevertheless we should understand that among the trials of this life we must ask for the power of endurance rather than for glory, because the joyousness of reigning cannot precede the times of suffering.²⁵

The inevitability of suffering, however, should not be a cause of dismay. Out of the cloud the Father addresses the fear of the disciples in the face of Christ’s impending death, asking them “Why do you tremble at being redeemed? Why do you ... fear to be set free?” He exhorts them to “let that happen which Christ wills and I will,”²⁶ to “cast away all fleshly fear,” and admonishes that “it is unworthy that you should fear in the passion of the Savior what by his gift you will not have to fear even at your own end.”²⁷ In this passage at the climax of *Tr* 51.7 Leo uses no fewer than five words to denote “fear”: *trepidatis*, *pavetis*, *formidinem*, *timeatis*, and *metuetis*. The message that Christ has conquered fear is directed to all believers: “in these three Apostles the whole Church has learned all that their sight beheld and their hearing received.”²⁸ The corollary of Christ’s victory is clear: “let not anyone be afraid to suffer for righteousness’ sake, or lack trust in the fulfillment of the

21 *Tr* 51.3.

22 Matt. 13:43.

23 Rom. 8:18.

24 Col. 3:3–4; *Tr* 51.3.

25 *Tr* 51.5.

26 Lars Thunberg’s remarks about Maximus the Confessor (580–662) apply equally to Leo: “The act of salvation ... is ... a cooperative act, an act of reciprocity.” See Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: the Vision of St Maximus the Confessor* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1985), 65–66.

27 *Tr* 51.7.

28 *Tr* 51.8.

promises,” for “through toil comes our passing over (*transitur*) to rest, and through death our passing over to life.” Accordingly, “since he assumed all the infirmity of our lowly state, if we abide in our confession and love of him, we conquer as he conquered, and receive what he promised.”²⁹ Suffering and death are not to be feared, for it is by sharing in the cross of Christ that we share in his resurrection, passing over with him from death to life, and entering into the “royal brilliance” of his kingdom.

Correcting the Heart

Christ’s victory over fear—fear of suffering, fear of persecution, fear of death—presupposes an orthodox understanding of the incarnation. In *Tr* 54 Leo begins by affirming that the properties of Christ’s divine and human natures remained in such a way that “we may not think of him as God without that which is man, nor as man without that which is God.”³⁰ This in turn means that “the one is passible, the other inviolable; and yet the indignity (*contumelia*) belongs to the same person, as does the glory.” This same person, therefore, “is present at once in weakness and in power; at once capable of death and the conqueror of death.”³¹ Leo speaks of “two forms,” each of which “does that which is proper to it (*agit utraque forma ... quod proprium est*) ... in communion with the other (*cum alterius communione*).”³² That is to say, the Word performs that which belongs to the Word and the flesh performs that which belongs to the flesh.³³ It follows from this that “even his very endurance of sufferings does not so expose him to the mental condition (*affectio*) of our lowliness as to disjoin him from the power of the Godhead.”³⁴ Indeed, his sufferings are an exercise of the incarnate Word’s power, and of the human will of Christ acting freely in communion with the divine: “all the persecution and

29 *Tr* 51.8.

30 *Tr* 54.1. Basil Studer understands the two natures in terms of a “double consubstantiality,” which denotes a twofold solidarity according to which the incarnate Son is simultaneously *consubstantialis Patri* and *consubstantialis Matri*. See Basil Studer, “Consubstantialis Patri, ‘Consubstantialis Matri’. Une antithèse christologique chez Léon le Grand,” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 18 (1972): 87–115.

31 *Tr* 54.1.

32 The sentence should be translated not “he acts in each form” but “each form acts.” On this see George L. Prestige, “The Greek Translation of the ‘Tome’ of St Leo,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1929–30): 183–184. On the patristic context of Leo’s use of the *utraque forma* formula, see Herman Michel Diepen, “L’*Assumptus Homo* patristique,” *Revue thomiste* 64 (1964): 32–52, 364–386.

33 *Tr* 54.2. Leo does not envisage Jesus as doing certain things in his divine capacity and others in his human capacity. Rather, he discerns the reality—and hence the distinctness—of the two sets of *proprietas* in the one subject.

34 On the idea that the two *proprietas* are *passibilitas* and *impassibilitas*, see Geoffrey D. Dunn, “Divine Impassibility and Christology in the Christmas Homilies of Leo the Great,” *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 71–85; “Suffering Humanity and Divine Impassibility: The Christology of the Lenten Homilies of Leo the Great,” *Augustinianum* 41(2001): 257–271.

punishment which the fury of the wicked inflicted on the Lord was not endured of necessity but undertaken of free will.”³⁵

Leo underscores the divine initiative by quoting St Paul to the effect that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,”³⁶ adding “and the Creator himself was wearing the creature which was to be reformed to the image of its Creator.”³⁷ Christ prepares for this image-restoration through his ministry of teaching and miracle-working,³⁸ but it begins in earnest in the garden of Gethsemane. Leo quotes Matt. 26:38–39—“my soul is very sorrowful even to death” and “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”—and suggests that “professing a certain fear with these words, he was curing (*curabat*) the mental state (*affectus*) of our weakness by sharing it, and checking our fear of punishment by undergoing it.”³⁹ “In that which is ours,” explains Leo, “the Lord trembled with our fear that he might be clothed with our weakness and vest our inconstancy with the firmness of his own strength.”⁴⁰ Initially dismayed by Christ’s humiliation, Peter is soon “restored to vigor, taking up the remedy (*remedium*) from the example (*exemplum*), so that the suddenly-shaken member returns to the firmness of the Head.”⁴¹

In a lapidary expression at the close of *Tr* 54.4, Leo affirms that Christ “preferred to entertain our fears, rather than exercise his own power,” thus bringing together the key themes of the co-existence in Christ of weakness and power and of his voluntary embracing of human fear. As in *Tr* 51, the members of the mystical body can triumph over fear by finding a *remedium* in the victory of the Head. Christ first feared in order that Peter might conquer fear—Peter “could not have vanquished the trembling of human frailty had not the vanquisher of death first feared.”⁴² Drawing on Luke 22:61, Leo paints a vivid portrait of Jesus looking back at Peter, and offers a theologically charged interpretation of the scene, according to which Christ “met his perturbed disciple with eyes which had foreseen his perturbation,” and “the gaze of the truth entered into him who was in need of correction of heart (*cordis ... correctio*).” It is, says Leo, as if Christ were saying,

35 *Tr* 54.2. In order for Christ to save us, it was first necessary that his human will should freely accept and embrace suffering. This insight is taken further by Maximus the Confessor. On this, see François-Marie Léthel, *Théologie de l'agonie du Christ: La liberté humaine du Fils de Dieu et son importance sotériologique mises en lumière par saint Maxime Confesseur* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1979), 18.

36 2 Cor. 5:19.

37 *Tr* 54.4.

38 *Tr* 54.4.

39 *Tr* 54.4.

40 *Tr* 54.4.

41 *Tr* 54.5.

42 *Tr* 54.5.

Turn to me, put your trust in me, follow me. This is the time of my passion. The hour of your suffering is not yet come. Why do you fear what you, too, shall overcome? The weakness which I accepted will not confound you. I was fearful (*trepidus*) for you; you should be secure in me.⁴³

The victory over fear of the Head of the Mystical Body, accordingly, brings correction of heart—*cordis correctio*—to the members (among whom Peter and the apostles are foremost). Immersed in the narration of the gospel, the faithful “feel something of the cross”—of Christ’s fear of suffering and death. Christ, however, has healed and overcome this fear, and, empowered by his *mysterium* (sacraments) and inspired by his *exemplum*, the members of his Mystical Body can face future suffering by looking to the resurrection in which, through the liturgy and the sacraments, they already possess a share.

To Heal and to Vanquish

Leo returns to the drama of Gethsemane in *Tr* 58. He begins by discussing the scene in John 13:27 in which Jesus says to Judas “what you are going to do, do quickly.” “This,” Leo contends, “is the voice ... not of fear but of readiness,” and Jesus “carries out the Father’s will for the redemption of the world in such a way as neither to promote nor to fear the crime which his persecutors were preparing.”⁴⁴ Whereas in *Tr* 54.4 Leo says that “the Lord trembled with our fear,” in *Tr* 58.4 the emphasis is a little different: “the Lord, unperturbed by any fear, but anxious only for the salvation of those who needed redeeming,” devoted the time before his passion to “holy teaching” (*sacrata doctrina*). This holy teaching culminates in the Gethsemane prayer of Matthew 26:39—“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”⁴⁵ Leo juxtaposes this text with that from John 18:11 in which Jesus asks “shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?”—also an example of *sacrata doctrina*—noting that “it is not to be thought that the Lord Jesus wished to escape the passion and the death whose mysteries (*sacramenta*) he had already handed over to his disciples’ keeping.”⁴⁶ Although in *Tr* 58.4 he seems to think less in terms of Christ sharing our fears and more in terms of his teaching us to overcome them, Leo makes it very clear that Christ embraces genuine physical and psychological suffering: “in assuming true and entire manhood he took the true sensations (*sensus*) of the body and the true feelings (*affectus*) of the mind.”⁴⁷ The fact that “everything in him was full of sacraments, full of miracles” does not in

43 *Tr* 54.5.

44 *Tr* 58.4.

45 *Tr* 58.4.

46 *Tr* 58.4. As for Maximus, so also for Leo the work of redemption depends on the freely willed acceptance of suffering by the incarnate Son operating in concert with the Father.

47 *Tr* 58.4.

any way mean that “he either shed false tears or took food from pretended hunger or simulated sleep.”⁴⁸ On the contrary, “in our humility he was despised, with our grief he was saddened, with our pain he was crucified.”⁴⁹

The two forms—the form of a servant and the form of God, the form of lowliness and the form of glory—co-operate to effect a twofold salvation: “his mercy underwent the sufferings of our mortality in order to heal them (*ut sanaret*), and his power encountered them in order to vanquish them (*ut vinceret*).”⁵⁰ For Leo, the therapeutic dimension of salvation (*ut sanaret*) is admirably expressed in Isaiah 53:4–5—“he carries our sins and is pained for us. ... He was wounded for our sins, and was stricken for our offences, and with his bruises we are healed.”⁵¹ Leo then offers an analysis of Jesus’s words “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,” and “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.”⁵² Regarding “let this cup pass from me,” Leo suggests that Christ “uses the voice of our nature, and pleads the cause of human frailty and trembling so that, in those things which we have to bear, he might strengthen our patience and drive away our fears.”⁵³ Once again, the purpose of Jesus’s words—of his *sacrata doctrina*—is that he might heal and vanquish (*ut sanaret* and *ut vinceret*), after which “he passes into another mental state (*affectus*)” which finds expression in “not as I will, but as thou wilt” and “if this chalice may not pass away, but if I must drink it, may thy will be done.”⁵⁴

Leo refers to Christ’s *sacrata doctrina* not as “words” (as in the Feltoe translation),⁵⁵ but as his “voice” (*vox*), indicating that what the faithful encounter in the gospel narrative and in the liturgy of the passion is far more than just a teaching or an example. Rather, it is Christ’s own voice crying out in the apostles, in the suffering Church, in the liturgical community.⁵⁶ Leo writes:

This voice of the Head is the saving-health (*salus*) of the whole Body. This voice has instructed all the faithful, kindled the zeal

48 Tr 58.4.

49 Tr 58.4.

50 Tr 58.4.

51 Tr 58.4. Leo quotes from a version which literally translates the Septuagint but which differs markedly from the Vulgate (Feltoe, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 170). On the idea of Christ as a physician, see B.W.M. Speekenbrink, “Christ the ‘*medicus humilis*’ in St. Augustine,” *Augustinus Magister: Congrès international augustinien* (Paris, Sep. 21–24, 1954, vol. 2), 623–639.

52 Matt. 26:39,42; Tr 58.5.

53 Tr 58.5.

54 Tr 58.5.

55 Feltoe, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 170.

56 On the theme of “Christ present in the Church” (*Christus praesens in ecclesia*), see Hans Feichtinger, *Die Gegenwart Christi in der Kirche bei Leo dem Grossen*, Patrologia: Beiträge zum Studium der Kirchenväter; Bd. 18 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2007).

of all the confessors, crowned all the martyrs. For who could overcome the world's hatred, the whirlwinds of trials, the terrors of persecutors, had not Christ, in the name of all and for all, said, to the Father, "Thy will be done?"⁵⁷

The voice of Christ in Gethsemane and on Calvary becomes the prayer of the faithful in such a way that the prayer through which he heals and vanquishes fear (*ut sanaret* and *ut vinceret*) becomes that by which they, too, are empowered to overcome. Leo exhorts, "let everyone learn this voice, ... and when the adversity of some violent trial overshadows them, let them use the protection of this powerful prayer, that, overcoming their trembling fear, they may accept their burden of suffering."⁵⁸ In *Tr* 66.3 he continues with this same thought, "There is no one to whom the prayer of Christ does not bring help,"⁵⁹ and, in the paschal liturgy, Christ's prayer—Christ's voice—becomes the voice of the Church and her members. Leo reaffirms the view of Augustine that Christ prays in us and for us.⁶⁰ In the liturgy his prayer is uttered in and through and on behalf of the faithful in such a way that the liturgy itself heals and vanquishes fear, bringing "correction of heart" and effecting in the life of believers that "passing over" from death to life in which the mystery of Easter consists.

The Glory of the Cross

In *Tr* 59 Leo's narration of the gospel begins in the moments after Jesus's agony in the garden and subsequent arrest. Leo discerns in Jesus's agony a dramatic demonstration of the two natures according to which the human nature is afraid to suffer while the divine nature enables the human to overcome fear and engage in combat with the devil:

By the words of his sacred prayer the Lord declared that the divine and the human nature was most truly and fully present in him, showing that from the human nature came his unwillingness to suffer and from the divine his determination to suffer. Then, when the trembling of weakness had been expelled and the loftiness of power confirmed, he returned to the purpose of his eternal plan, and in the form of a sinless slave encountered the devil who was raging at him.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Tr* 58.5.

⁵⁸ *Tr* 58.5.

⁵⁹ *Tr* 66.3.

⁶⁰ St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 85.1 in Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, vol. 39, 1176–1177; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 8, 409–410).

⁶¹ *Tr* 59.1. For Leo, the idea of victory over the devil and victory over (and freedom from) death are closely related. See Jean Rivi re, "La r demption chez s. L on le Grand," *Revue des sciences*

Christ's triumph over fear in Gethsemane and over the devil on Calvary means that we need to see the cross as an instrument of victory and glory. Indeed, whereas in his sermon on the transfiguration Leo depicts the cross as preceding the glory to which it leads (and which is prefigured on Mount Tabor), here the time of suffering and the time of glorification converge. Switching from the Matthean account to the Johannine, Leo presents Christ's prayer for glorification in John 12:23–32 as a kind of parallel to the Gethsemane narrative, inviting himself and his flock to

let our understanding, illumined by the Spirit of Truth, take up with a pure and free heart the glory of the cross (*gloria crucis*) which irradiates heaven and earth, and perceive interiorly what the Lord meant when he said of his impending passion: "The hour is come that the Son of man may be glorified."⁶²

The true significance of the Father's glorification of the Son finds expression in Leo's paradoxical exclamation "O wondrous power of the cross! O ineffable glory of the passion, in which is contained ... the power of the Crucified." Here the formulae "power of the cross," "glory of the passion," and "power of the Crucified" echo the earlier reference to the *gloria crucis*.⁶³ The glorious cross becomes "the fount of all blessings, the source of all graces," conferring on believers "strength for weakness, glory for shame, life for death," so that it is through the *gloria crucis*—through the cross which is already radiant with the resurrection glory to which it gives access—that Jesus brings the beginnings of healing and victory to those oppressed by the fear of suffering and death.

In virtue of the incarnation, Christ's voluntary sacrifice—understood in *Tr* 59 primarily in terms of glory and victory—accomplishes the destruction of death. Leo writes that "though the nature of the Godhead could not sustain the sting of death, nevertheless he took from us in being born that which he might offer on our behalf."⁶⁴ He assumed our weakness and mortality precisely in order to offer his own death as a sacrifice, and also in order to heal our weakness and vanquish our fear. Leo places the Vulgate translation of the words of Hosea 13:14—"O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite"—on the lips of the incarnate Son of whom he writes that "he threatened our death with the power of his death," and that "by dying he underwent the laws of hell, but by rising he dissolved them, and so broke off the perpetuity of death as to render it temporal instead of eternal."⁶⁵ It is in this destruction of the perpetuity of death that Christ puts an end to death's

religieuses 9 (1929): 17–42; 153–187; Filippo Carcione, "I 'diritti del diavolo' nella soteriologia di S. Leone Magno," *Rivista Cistercense* 2 (1985): 113–126.

62 *Tr* 59.6; John 12:23.

63 *Tr* 59.7.

64 *Tr* 59.8.

65 *Tr* 59.8.

power to instill terror. The cross becomes a cross of glory and of victory from which the *claritas* of the kingdom already shines. In carrying the cross Simon of Cyrene “pre-signifies the Gentiles’ faith, to whom the cross of Christ would be not shame but glory” and shares Christ’s sufferings, embodying the Pauline teaching that “if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.”⁶⁶ By his own free and willing acceptance of death—made present in the Holy Week liturgy as mystery and example—Christ is glorified on the cross with the glory which will be fully revealed in the resurrection. This convergence of cross and resurrection—of suffering and glory—serves to heal and vanquish in us the fear of death, so that, even in the midst of our sufferings and anxieties, we may follow the path of the Cyrenian and begin to be united with Christ in his resurrection, his glorification, and his kingly reign.

The Cry of Dereliction

In *Tr* 67, in which he brings before his congregation the gospel reading of the cry of dereliction on Calvary, Leo continues this investigation into the way in which we participate in the mystery of Christ’s therapeutic suffering. Expounding the connection between Scripture, liturgy, and the mystery of being “in Christ,” he affirms that the principal reason for our eucharistic lifting up of our hearts⁶⁷

is that those things which the gospel truth has narrated have been sung by the voices of the prophets not as events which are destined to happen but as events already accomplished, and that the Holy Spirit was proclaiming as already fulfilled things that human ears had not yet learnt were to take place.⁶⁸

More specifically, Christ is the seed of David, the author of the Psalms (and, in this case, Psalm 22). David “endured none of those punishments which he relates as inflicted upon himself.” However, “because by his mouth one spoke who was to assume passible flesh from his stock, the history of the cross is rightly anticipated in the person of him who bore in himself the bodily origin of the Savior.” The corollary of this is that “David truly suffered in Christ, because Jesus was truly crucified in the flesh in David.”⁶⁹ Having thus prepared the ground for the climax of the sermon, in which he discusses Jesus’s quoting of David in the cry of dereliction, Leo reprises the idea that his suffering is therapeutic for humanity. Although the birth and ministry of Jesus are full of wonders and “signs of Godhead,”⁷⁰ neverthe-

66 *Tr* 59.5, with reference to 2 Tim. 2:12 and Rom. 8:17.

67 *Erigendi sursum nostri cordis*. As in 74.5, this is a liturgical allusion to the *sursum corda* of the Eucharistic Prayer.

68 *Tr* 67.1.

69 *Tr* 67.1.

70 *Tr* 67.5.

less “he had assumed the reality of our weaknesses, and without share in sin had excluded himself from no human frailty, that he might impart what was his to us and heal (*curaret*) what was ours in himself.”⁷¹

Continuing the medical metaphor, Leo writes:

A double remedy (*remedium*) was prepared for us in our misery by the almighty physician (*medicus*), one part consisting of mystery and the other of example (*in sacramento; in exemplo*), so that by the one divine things might be bestowed, by the other human things driven out.⁷²

Leo adds that, in order to enable us to appropriate for ourselves “this ineffable restoration of our health (*salutis ... reparationem*),” Christ invites us to follow in his footsteps.⁷³ Christ is rightly called our “way” (Leo is referring to John 14:6) “because except through Christ there is no coming to Christ,” and “the one who walks the path of Christ’s endurance and humiliation advances through him and towards him.” All these things, however, “the Lord of hosts and King of glory passed through in the form of our weakness and in the likeness of sinful flesh,⁷⁴ so that amidst the danger of this present life we might find it preferable not to escape them by refusing them but to conquer them by enduring them.”⁷⁵ As in *Tr* 58, Leo juxtaposes the twin themes of healing and vanquishing (*ut sanaret* and *ut vinceret*), depicting salvation in terms both of *salus* and *gloria*. Moreover, just as “David truly suffered in Christ, because Jesus was truly crucified in the flesh in David,” we are all, in mysterious fashion, included in Christ’s cry of dereliction on the cross:

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Head, transforming (*transformans*) all the members of his body in himself, cried out amidst the torture of the cross in the voice of those redeemed by him that cry which he had once uttered in the psalm, “O God, my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me?”⁷⁶

Leo proceeds to explain that “that cry (*vox*) ... is a lesson (*doctrina*), not a complaint.” He argues that because “in him there is one person of God and man, and he could not have been forsaken by him from whom he could not be separated, Christ asks

71 *Tr* 67.5.

72 Feltoe (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 179) suggests that the alternative reading *erigantur* (“elevated”) might make more sense than “driven out” (*exigantur*).

73 *Tr* 67.6.

74 Rom. 8:3.

75 *Tr* 67.6.

76 *Tr* 67.7, quoting Ps. 21:1.

on behalf of us trembling and weak ones why the flesh that is afraid to suffer has not been heard.”⁷⁷

Once again Leo quotes from Matthew 26:39, 42 Christ’s words in Gethsemane uttered “to cure (*ad sanandum*) and correct (*ad corrigendum*) the fear born of our weakness.”⁷⁸ This leads him to pose an important question about the cry of dereliction on Calvary:

Once he had vanquished the trembling of the flesh and passed over (*transierat*) to the Father’s will and trampled all dread of death under foot and was completing his ordained work, why does he seek, at the very moment of his triumphant exaltation in so great a victory, the cause and reason of his being forsaken, that is, not heard?⁷⁹

In Gethsemane, Christ the incarnate Word of God embraces suffering and death in his human nature—by his own free and deliberate choice—as an act of salvation-as-healing (*salus*), thereby both healing and vanquishing the fear of suffering and of death. On Calvary, however, in his cry of dereliction, we see Christ “transforming all the members of his body in himself”—the members of his Mystical Body, who, in his own voice, are crying out (just as in the original cry of dereliction in Psalm 22 David is crying out as a member of Christ).⁸⁰ In *Tr* 58 Leo presents Christ in Gethsemane as praying in and on behalf of the members of his Mystical Body, but in *Tr* 67 he depicts the Mystical Body as praying in and through Christ on Calvary. If Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane is the therapeutic and salvific action of his human will operating in perfect union with his divine will, his cry on the cross is the action of his Mystical Body appealing in Christ’s own voice for that healing and vanquishing of its fears and for that “correction of heart” which the incarnate Word alone can bring. The Holy Week liturgy makes Christ’s Calvary prayer present as *mysterium* and *exemplum*. It gives concrete expression to that prayer precisely in so far as it is the prayer not just of the Head but also of the entire Mystical Body—of the whole Christ—which is thereby enabled to participate in Christ’s passion and resurrection and thus appropriate and recapitulate his healing and victory. It is when the prayer of Christ on Calvary truly becomes the prayer of the Mystical Body that the faithful “feel something of the cross at the time of the Lord’s Passion,”

77 *Tr* 67.7. This strong affirmation of the unity of person in Christ reflects the fundamental continuity between Cyril of Alexandria and Leo.

78 *Tr* 67.7.

79 *Tr* 67.7.

80 *Tr* 67.1. Augustine portrays the faithful as being included in the Gethsemane prayer—which he sees as a prayer of the “whole Christ” uttered “in the name of his body”—in his Commentary on Psalm 140, 2–3 (*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, vol. 40, 2028–2029; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 8, 644–645).

sharing in the healing *remedium* of Christ's death and resurrection, and "passing over" with him from death to life.

Interior Remedies

In *Tr* 68 Leo continues his exegesis of Psalm 22:1 and Matthew 27:46—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—focusing once again on the salvific role of Christ's human will. He begins by emphasizing that we should not take these words in the sense that "when Jesus was fixed upon the wood of the cross, the omnipotence of the Father's deity departed from him."⁸¹ On the contrary, "the nature of God and the nature of man came together in a unity so great that it could neither be destroyed by punishment nor disjoined by death."⁸² This solid and inseparable *unitas* guaranteed that, "while each substance remained in what belonged to itself, God did not forsake the suffering of his body, and flesh did not make God passible, because the divinity which was in the sufferer was not in the suffering." Rather, "divine power joined itself to human weakness in order that, while making his own what belonged to us, God might make ours what belonged to him." Leo makes a direct comparison between the christological unity of the human and divine natures in the incarnate Son and the Trinitarian unity of the Father and the Son: "Although the dispensation of becoming incarnate belonged properly to the only-begotten Son of God, the Father was not disjoined from the Son any more than the flesh was divided from the Word."⁸³ Consequently, the cry "why have you forsaken me?" reflects not "the deprivation of assistance" but "the determination to die."⁸⁴ Leo marvels at the way in which Christ's life could be laid down and taken up again by his own power, and adds:

That the Lord was handed over to his passion was as much of the Father's will as of his own, so that not only did the Father "forsake" him, but in a certain sense he also abandoned himself, not in frightened withdrawal, but in voluntary surrendering.⁸⁵

In virtue of this voluntary self-surrendering "the might of the Crucified ... refused to make use of his manifest power,"⁸⁶ willing instead that, in the weakness of his

⁸¹ *Tr* 68.1.

⁸² *Tr* 68.1. The two natures come together in a unity because the person of the Son—the ground of that unity—brings human nature into unity with his own divine nature. The unity of the person (in the language of Maximus the Confessor, of the *theandric person*) is paramount. See Basil Studer, "Una persona in Christo. Ein augustinisches Thema bei Leo dem Grossen," *Augustinianum* 25 (1985): 453–487.

⁸³ *Tr* 68.1.

⁸⁴ *Tr* 68.2.

⁸⁵ *Tr* 68.2.

⁸⁶ *Tr* 68.2.

human nature, he should experience fear and abandonment to the point of crying out “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

This freely willed refusal on the part of the incarnate Son to avail himself of his proper power constitutes a sacrifice which has salvation-historical implications. Christ effects “a transition from the Law to the Gospel, from the synagogue to the Church, from many sacrifices to the one victim.”⁸⁷ In *Tr* 95—an extended exegesis of Matthew 5:1–12 (on the beatitudes)—Leo depicts this transition from Law to Gospel in terms of Jesus bringing interior remedies (*remedia interiora*) and cures of the soul (*curaciones animarum*) in virtue of which the Spirit of adoption dispels the “terror of bondage.”⁸⁸ These cures of the soul culminate in peace (*pax*), adoptive sonship, and harmony of wills between God and man.⁸⁹ In *Tr* 68 the transition from Law to Gospel, from the “terrors of bondage” to adoption, is decisively effected by the incarnate Word’s own harmony of wills—by his voluntary surrendering, his self-abandonment, and his refusal to deploy his own power in order to evade physical and psychological suffering. Christ’s saving sacrifice consists precisely in his abandonment of himself to fear and forsakenness—that is, to a synergy of the divine and human wills in accordance with which, always in perfect unity with the will of the Father, his divine will determines in perfect unity with his own human will that in his human nature he should be (in effect) abandoned to fear and suffering. In virtue of that self-abandonment to physical and psychological suffering in which the synergy of divine and human wills in Christ finds perfect expression, the incarnate Son effects a transition from Law to Gospel with its attendant “interior remedies” and “cures of the soul.” In order to liberate them from the “terror of bondage” and the fear of suffering and death, the risen Christ extends these remedies to the members of his Mystical Body who, inasmuch as they “feel something of the cross at the time of the Lord’s passion,” participate in the healing *remedium* of Christ’s death and resurrection, and so “pass over” with him from death to life.

The Flesh of the Crucified

The statement in *Tr* 67.7 that the cry of dereliction is uttered by “the Lord Jesus Christ, our Head, transforming all the members of his body in himself,” picks up on a theme which Leo develops in greater depth in *Tr* 63. He begins by explaining:

Human nature has been received by the Son of God into such a union that not only in that man who is the first-begotten of all creation,⁹⁰ but also in all his saints there is one and the self-same

⁸⁷ *Tr* 68.3.

⁸⁸ *Tr* 95.1.

⁸⁹ *Tr* 95.9; *Tr* 26.3. See Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 139–145.

⁹⁰ Col. 1:18.

Christ (*unus idemque sit Christus*), and, as the Head cannot be separated from the members, so the members cannot be separated from the Head.⁹¹

Leo is keen to underline the scriptural foundations of this doctrine of the “whole Christ,” Head and members.⁹² Firstly, in direct reference to 1 Corinthians 15:28, he affirms that “although it is not in this life, but in eternity that God is to be ‘all in all,’ even now he is the undivided indweller of his temple, which is the Church.” Secondly, he cites in support of his argument Matthew 28:20: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age,”⁹³ which he understands in terms of Christ—the incarnate Son—effectively prolonging his incarnation in the Church and in individual believers.⁹⁴ Finally, he provides a brief exegesis of Colossians 1:18–20—“he is the head of the body, the Church ... for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things.”⁹⁵

Leo proceeds to ask “what is suggested to our hearts by these and many other testimonies but that in all things we shall be renewed in his image who, remaining in the form of God, deigned to take the form of a slave?”⁹⁶ Leo’s answer is that Christ provided us with a *sacramentum* and an *exemplum* (or, as we have seen above, a *remedium* and a *doctrina*):

He took on himself all our weaknesses, the consequence of sin, without sharing in sin, so that he might not lack the feelings (*affectiones*) of hunger and thirst, sleep and fatigue, grief and weeping, but might undergo the fiercest sufferings unto the extremity of death, because no one could be released from the snares of death, unless he in whom alone the nature of all was innocent allowed himself to be slain.⁹⁷

Leo adds that “all that the Son of God did and taught (*et fecit, et docuit*) for the world’s reconciliation we not only know as a matter of past history, but feel

91 Tr 63.3.

92 The scriptural and patristic foundations of this idea are explored in Émile Mersch, *The Whole Christ: The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in Scripture and Tradition*, trans. John R. Kelly (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1938).

93 At the heart of Leo’s teaching on incarnation and salvation is a “theology of the Emmanuel”—a theology of God-with-us in the incarnate Son and in the Church. See Herman Michel Diepen, “L’Assumptus Homo à Chalcédoine,” *Revue thomiste* 51 (1951): 573–608; 53 (1953): 254–286.

94 See Manuel Garrido Bonaño, “Prolongación de Cristo en su cuerpo místico, según San León Magno,” *Studium. Revista de filosofía y teología* 15 (1975): 491–505.

95 Tr 63.3.

96 Tr 63.4; Phil. 2:6.

97 Tr 63.4.

in the power of its present effect (*in praesentium operum virtute*).⁹⁸ Here “did and taught”—a clear reference to Acts 1:1—correspond to *sacramentum* and *exemplum*, to *remedium* and *doctrina*, while “in its present effect” corresponds to the sacramental and liturgical activity of the Church which provides the context for Leo’s exposition.

The “present effect” of Christ’s saving mysteries is first experienced in baptism, which is nothing other than a “passing over” into the Mystical Body of the incarnate Son who dwells in his Church and renews his members in his own image. Christ’s sufferings, accordingly, “are shared not only by the martyrs’ glorious courage, but also in the very act of regeneration by the faith of all the new-born.” Leo states:

To renounce the devil and believe in God, to pass over (*transitur*) from our old condition into newness of life, to cast off the earthly image and to put on the heavenly form—all this is a kind of death and a similitude of resurrection, so that he that is received by Christ and receives Christ is not the same after the baptismal washing as he was before, for the body of the regenerate becomes the flesh of the Crucified.⁹⁹

In virtue of the incarnation, the Word assumes human nature. In his cry of dereliction, his *vox* is the voice of the members of his Mystical Body. We “pass over” into his Mystical Body—becoming, indeed, the “flesh of the Crucified”—through the mystery of baptism, in consequence of which we are identified with the fearful, suffering, abandoned Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary, and are able to share in his “interior remedies” and “cures of the soul”—in his healing and vanquishing of the fear of suffering and death (*ut sanaret; ut vinceret*), and in his “correction of heart” (*correctio cordis*). Moreover, because in sharing in Christ’s suffering we share in his healing and victory, it follows that we also share—even in the present—in his glory: “the same brightness (*splendor*) appears everywhere through the many rays of the one Light, and there can be no merit on the part of any Christian that is not part of the glory of Christ.”¹⁰⁰

Passing Over into Christ

This participation in the divine light is effected by the Eucharist, which effects a further “passing over” (*transitus*) into Christ: “Partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ effects nothing other than that we pass over (*transeamus*) into that which we then take up, and both in spirit and in flesh carry him everywhere, in and with

98 Tr 63.6.

99 Tr 63.6.

100 Tr 63.7.

whom we died, were buried, and rose again.”¹⁰¹ A similar expression is found in one of Leo’s letters: “in that mystic distribution of spiritual nourishment, that which is imparted and taken is of such a kind that, receiving the virtue of the celestial food, we pass over (*transeamus*) into the flesh of him who became our flesh.”¹⁰² As we saw at the beginning of this study, Leo believes that “we must strive to be found partakers (*consortes*) also of Christ’s resurrection, and, while we are in this body, to pass over from death to life.”¹⁰³ It is, above all, our eucharistic “passing over” into Christ which accomplishes this participation. It is the Eucharist that establishes Christians as fully “in Christ” while at the same time establishing Christ as fully “in the Church” and “in the individual Christian” to the extent that the mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary—mysteries through which the incarnate Son heals and vanquishes the fear of suffering and death—give expression to the identity between his own *vox* and the cry of his Mystical Body.

In *Tr* 63 Leo uses different forms of the verb *transeo* to denote the way in which we pass over (*transitur*) from oldness to newness in baptism and in which we pass over (*transeamus*) into the Body and Blood of Christ which we receive in the Eucharist. In *Tr* 72 (on the resurrection) he explores this idea of “passing over” in even greater depth. He begins by reminding his congregation that Christ’s self-emptying (*exinanitio*) “was the dispensation of compassion, not the privation of power,”¹⁰⁴ in virtue of which he made “the impassible passible” in order “not that power might fail in weakness, but that weakness might pass over (*transire*) into incorruptible power.”¹⁰⁵ Elaborating on this theme, Leo observes that Pascha/Passover becomes *transitus* in Latin,¹⁰⁶ and that the Pascha/Passover of Jesus is nothing other than his passing out of the world to his Father (*ut transeat ex hoc mundo ad Patrem*).¹⁰⁷ Commenting on John 13:1 (“when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father”) he asks “in what nature would it be that he thus passed out (*erat transitus iste*) unless it was ours, since the Father was in the Son and the Son in the Father inseparably?” On the eve of his passion, Christ prepares “a blessed passing over (*beatum transitum*) for his faithful ones” so that they might share in the “ineffable gift” of his exaltation into divine glory.

Leo concludes by quoting John 17:20–21—“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us”—understanding this not as a prayer for ecclesial unity but as a request for glorification “not

101 *Tr* 63.7.

102 *Ep* 59.2.

103 *Tr* 71.1.

104 *Tr* 72.5. Similar expressions are found in *Ep* 28.3 and *Tr* 23.2.

105 *Tr* 72.5.

106 *Tr* 72.6.

107 *Tr* 72.6.

only for his Apostles and disciples but also for the entire Church.”¹⁰⁸ Whereas in *Tr* 63 the *transitus* language is used to denote the passing over of the believer into Christ’s body in virtue of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, in *Tr* 72 it gives expression to the entire scope of Christ’s saving work, inasmuch as the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension constitute a single movement in which Christ’s assumed humanity—with all its weakness and lowliness and passibility, with all its susceptibility to suffering and fear and death—passes over, firstly, into union with the divinity and, secondly, into risen glory (from the *forma servi* to the *forma gloriae*).¹⁰⁹ Finally, the *transitus* of Christ’s human nature from the *forma servi* to the *forma gloriae* is itself intrinsically bound up with the *transitus* of the incarnate Son to the Father. *Transitus*, accordingly, has a threefold significance for Leo, denoting as it does the sacramental *transitus* of the believer into the body of Christ, the christological and soteriological *transitus* of Christ’s assumed human nature from lowliness to glory, and the Trinitarian *transitus* of the Son who passes over from the world to his Father.

Possessors of Paradise

The *transitus* of Christ’s human nature from lowliness to glory is one of the principal themes of Leo’s sermons for the liturgical celebrations of the Resurrection and Ascension, and it is this *transitus* which completes the process by which Christ heals and vanquishes our fear of suffering and death. Taken on its own, the passion had not so much healed the disciples’ fear of death as intensified it: “Christ’s death had greatly perturbed (*turbaverat*) the disciples’ hearts, and, after his torture on the cross, ... a kind of torpor of distrust had crept over the minds weighed down with grief.”¹¹⁰ Their initial doubt concerning the reports of the empty tomb were the result of human weakness—weakness which “the Spirit of Truth would in no way have permitted to exist in his preachers’ breasts had not their trembling anxiety and careful hesitation laid the foundations of our faith.”¹¹¹ The fear, doubt, and weakness experienced and exhibited by the disciples were for the sake of the rest of the Mystical Body: “It was *our* perplexities and our dangers that were counseled in the Apostles. ... Others doubted, that *we* might not doubt.”¹¹² During the period between the resurrection and ascension “great sacraments (*sacramenta*) ... were confirmed ... great mysteries (*mysteria*) revealed” in which “the fear of awful death

108 *Tr* 72.6.

109 This soteriology is similar in structure to that outlined by Hilary. See Paul Galtier, “La *forma Dei* et la *forma servi* selon saint Hilaire de Poitiers,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 48 (1960): 101–118.

110 *Tr* 73.1. On Leo’s theology of the ascension, see Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 199–134; Henri Denis, *La théologie de l’ascension d’après saint Léon le Grand* (unpublished dissertation, University of Lyons, 1959).

111 *Tr* 73.1.

112 *Tr* 73.1.

(*metus dirae mortis*) was removed, and the immortality not only of the soul but also of the flesh was declared."¹¹³ On the Emmaus Road, Christ challenges our own doubt by upbraiding the two disciples for their "terror and bewilderment."¹¹⁴ Even in the midst of the resurrection appearances the disciples were "storm-tossed by fearful thoughts" (*trepididis cogitationibus aestuarent*) until Christ says "peace be unto you,"¹¹⁵ and so reassures them that "what was swirling around in their hearts might not be their fixed opinion."

The purpose of these appearances is to demonstrate to the disciples—and, through them, to the entire Church—that the agonized, crucified, abandoned Jesus of the passion narratives is truly glorified. Christ, accordingly, "presents before the doubters' eyes the signs of the cross ... that the wounds of unbelieving hearts (*infidelium cordium vulnera*) might be healed by the marks of nails and lance."¹¹⁶ As a result of the resurrection appearances, the Apostles, "who had been both trembling (*trepidi*) at his death on the cross and doubtful about believing his resurrection, were so strengthened by the clearness of the truth" that sadness gave way to joy.¹¹⁷ More specifically, they rejoiced that, in the ascended Christ, human nature was "associated on the throne with his glory, to whose nature it was united in the Son."¹¹⁸ Because it is our human nature which is exalted in Christ, and because the whole Christ—the Mystical Body together with the Head—is taken into heaven, "Christ's ascension is our uplifting (*provectio*), and the hope of the Body is called whither the glory of the Head has preceded."¹¹⁹ In consequence, heaven already belongs to us: "not only are we confirmed as possessors of paradise today, but in Christ we have penetrated the heights of heaven."¹²⁰

All of this presupposes the threefold *transitus*, according to which human beings pass over into Christ's body through baptism and the Eucharist, Christ's human nature passes over from passibility and lowliness to impassibility and glory, and the incarnate person of the Son passes over to his heavenly Father. Just as the Holy Week liturgy presents before Leo's flock the picture of Christ fearing and suffering on our behalf (as a *remedium* and *doctrina*; a *sacramentum* and *exemplum*) in order to heal and conquer (*ut sanaret; ut vinceret*) our fear of suffering and death, so the Resurrection and Ascension liturgy sets before the faithful "the signs of

113 Tr 73.2.

114 Tr 73.2.

115 Tr 73.3; Luke 24:36; John 20:19.

116 Tr 73.3.

117 Tr 73.4.

118 Tr 73.4.

119 Tr 73.4.

120 Tr 73.4.

the cross”—the wounds of the risen Christ—for the healing (*ad sananda*) of the wounds of our unfaithful hearts. It recapitulates—today, within the eucharistic celebration, and through the means of the “narration of the gospel”—the passing over (*transitus*) into heaven, into glory, into union with Christ’s divinity and with the person of the Father, of the human nature which the Son assumed. It makes present, in the *paschale sacramentum*, that human nature whose weakness and fear he healed and conquered in Gethsemane and on Calvary, and whose lowliness he exalted and glorified in the resurrection and ascension. Containing in itself “interior remedies” and “cures of the soul,” it ensures that, in their “passing over” with Christ and in Christ from death to life, the faithful possess within themselves the mystery of Easter.

Conclusion

Leo’s exegesis of those gospel passages—the agony in Gethsemane, the cry of dereliction on Calvary—which depict the prayer of the suffering Christ is designed to foster both contemplation and participation. In *Behold the Pierced One* Pope Benedict echoes Leo’s understanding of the *mysterium* and *exemplum* of the prayer of Jesus:

We see who Jesus is if we see him at prayer. The Christian confession of faith comes from participating in the prayer of Jesus, from being drawn into his prayer and being privileged to behold it; it interprets the experience of Jesus’ prayer, and its interpretation of Jesus is correct because it springs from a sharing in what is most personal and intimate to him.¹²¹

Leo likewise believes that we both behold Jesus’ prayer and are drawn into it. We who “feel something of the cross at the time of the Lord’s passion” cause the prayer of the Head to resound throughout the Mystical Body. Participating in his cross, we come to share in his resurrection and glorification, appropriating his “interior remedies” and “cures of the soul,” his healing of—and victory over—our fear of suffering and death.

Daniel A. Keating notes that, while he never uses the term, Leo “is one of the clearest exponents of the content of the doctrine of divinization in the Western tradition.”¹²² Drawing on the Greek Fathers and later Byzantine authors,

121 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 19.

122 Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, FL: Sapientia, 2007), 9. Keating discusses Leo’s understanding of deification at greater length in *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 251–288. A similar point is made by John

Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos portrays deification as a process which begins with healing of the *nous* and culminates in the possession of the divine light.¹²³ Leo, too, understands the *sacramenta* of Christ—the saving *mysteria* and the liturgical *mysteria*—as *remedia* which effect “correction of heart” (*correctio cordis*), bring healing of the will, and apply “interior remedies” and “cures of the soul.” These remedies are in turn ordered towards the brightness—the *claritas*—of the kingdom of God, and towards our sharing in Christ’s passing-over—his *transitus*—from the *forma servi* to the *forma gloriae*. Christ’s prayer to the Father in Gethsemane and on Calvary is a “remedy” that brings *salus*—that salvation which confers inner healing and freedom from the fear of suffering and death, and in virtue of which “the life of believers contains in itself the mystery of Easter.” Forever associated with Pope John Paul II, the message “be not afraid” is also the gospel of his great predecessor Leo.

Meyendorff in his work *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 25.

123 Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, trans. Esther Williams (Levadia, Greece: Birth of Theotokos Monastery, 2005).