

John Paul II's Ecclesiology and St. Thomas Aquinas

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What Will Be Compared in Both Ecclesiologies

TO COMPARE John Paul II's ecclesiology to Aquinas's is not an easy task, and requires some choices. Some of the difficulties in comparing the two arise from St. Thomas. Like all theologians of his time, Thomas never published a specifically ecclesiological text; his ecclesiology is present implicitly, diffused in all his works.¹ Some difficulties also came from John Paul II. His texts have different levels of authority, and although all of them are canonically "his" texts, his direct involvement in them is not always the

¹ See Yves M.-J. Congar, "Vision de l'Eglise chez Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 62 (1978): 523–24: "Il n'y aura de traité spécial ou séparé de l'Eglise que sous l'action de deux conjonctures qui n'étaient pas encore à l'oeuvre au moment où Thomas rédigeait: d'abord quand la société temporelle, au moins dans l'action de ses chefs, affirmera son autonomie à l'égard de la 'sainte Eglise': et ce seront, à partir de 1300, d'abord à l'occasion du conflit entre Philippe le Bel et Boniface VIII, puis jusque vers 1360, une bonne trentaine de traités sur le pouvoir ou la juridiction du Pape et des souverains. Deuxièmement, quand des éléments importants de l'institution ecclésiastique seront mis en question: lors du schisme d'Occident et du conciliarisme, puis du gallicanisme; par les Réformes protestantes du XVIe siècle. L'écrit de S. Thomas édité sous le titre trompeur de *Contra errores Graecorum* ne rente pas encore dans cette seconde vague: il n'est qu'une consultation demandée par le Pape touchant un libellus ou recueil de textes, hélas, en partie inauthentiques. Il semble difficile de penser que Thomas ne se soit pas posé la question de l'Eglise. Il aura estimé en avoir suffisamment exposé tous les éléments dans la synthèse malheureusement inachevée de la Somme. De fait, quand on les recherche on les trouve et l'on peut en dresser une liste. S. Thomas a dû penser avoir traité en leur lieu propre des réalités qui intègrent la réalité complexe de qu'est l'Eglise et qui n'est autre que le retour à Dieu de l'humanité par les voies et moyens aptes à le procurer. Ces mots évoquent le plan même de la Somme, et donc la conception de la théologie que Thomas a pratiquée."

same. When we speak about compared theologies, such a direct involvement matters. Therefore, I will limit myself to those texts which possess such great authority that we can assume that the pope looked closely at them (encyclicals, Apostolic Constitutions, *Motu proprio*).

The main difficulty is to choose the subjects to compare. Both authors have addressed many ecclesiological topics, and what they say is often what any Catholic would or should say. It also happens that their positions differ: They have different positions (e.g., on the difference between priest and bishop,² or on the focus on the Church as Communion)³ not

² Vatican II (cf. *Lumen Gentium* §21) teaches that the episcopate is sacramental, being the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, and not only jurisdictional. This was not clear in medieval theology. For Thomas the main point is that the priest can consecrate the Eucharist, which is the highest priestly act, and therefore the distinction between the bishop and the priest is only a distinction of jurisdiction (cf. *Summa theologiae* III, q. 67, a. 2; *Summa contra gentiles* IV, ch. 76). He deals with some notions coming from the ancient Church which confuse him somewhat: He knows that the vocabulary has not always been most clear, but that there was some distinction in reality (cf. *ST* II–II, q. 184, a. 6, ad 1). Of course he maintains that the successors of the Apostles are the bishops (cf. *ST* III, q. 72, a. 11; *De perfectione vitae spiritualis*, cap. 16). Some authors would insist more than I do on the significance of Thomas's texts about the distinction between bishop and priest (most notably Joseph Lécuyer, "Les étapes de l'enseignement thomiste sur l'épiscopat," *Revue Thomiste* 57 [1957]: 29–52; Cardinal Walter Kasper followed a similar line in an unpublished conference at the Angelicum in 2000). I agree with Fr. Gy's questions to Fr. Lécuyer: "le P. Lécuyer a étudié la théologie de l'épiscopat de saint Thomas, en particulier dans un article très important de la *Revue Thomiste* où il rassemble tous les textes susceptibles d'être interprétés dans le sens de la sacramentalité de l'épiscopat. Le P. Lécuyer examine de façon détaillée les écrits de saint Thomas, mais pas ceux des théologiens contemporains ni ceux des canonistes de la même époque. Il montre à juste titre que la pensée de Thomas sur l'épiscopat est nuancée, mais à mon avis il la force un peu dans le sens de la sacramentalité et il l'isole par rapport à son contexte historique. De plus, il ne tient pas assez compte de deux données: à savoir, d'une part, l'importance croissante, depuis la fin du XIIe siècle, de la distinction entre ordre et juridiction et, d'autre part, l'insistance de Thomas sur le ministère sacerdotal de l'eucharistie" (Pierre-Marie Gy, OP, "Evolution de saint Thomas sur la théologie du sacrement de l'ordre," *Revue Thomiste* 99 [1999]: 186); in the same issue of the *Revue Thomiste*, I tried to show Cajetan's theology on the difference between priest and bishop, following the line of St. Thomas, dealing with historical questions, and concluding that the best approach was to follow the custom of the Church (cf. "Le prêtre chez Cajetan," *Revue Thomiste* 99 [1999]: 260–63). On this point the main line of the whole Thomistic tradition has not been followed by Vatican II: The Council followed an older tradition, which Thomas partly knew without fully following it.

³ One of the first theologians (perhaps the first one among Roman Catholics) to develop this notion did so in connection to his master Thomas: Jean-Jérôme Hamer, OP, *L'Eglise est une communion* (Paris: Cerf, 1962). For John Paul II the ecclesiology

so much because of their own systems, but because of the prevalent theology of their time.

Some typical topics must be identified if both ecclesiologies are to be compared on a specific way. As it seems that John Paul II has to be compared with Thomas rather than vice versa (since Thomas came first and we can examine his influence on the pope), I have selected three topics in Aquinas's texts which demonstrate his understanding of the Church within his whole theology, and to which I shall compare some of the pope's texts:

1. the cooperation of the Church with God,
2. Church unity and Church membership, and
3. the possibility of the proclamation of faith and Church authority.

The Cooperation of the Church with God

Thomas: God Speaks a Human Language with Human Beings

One of the main questions in ecclesiology asks whether the Church's role in bringing out to the world the salvation obtained once and for all by Christ is an active role, or whether she is purely passive. For Thomas, there is no doubt that the Church is active; for instance, he holds that the sacraments really give grace and do not only declare it to have been given.⁴ The global efficiency of the Church appears best—but not only—in the sacraments, and in the sacramental ministry.

Thomas's theology of the efficiency of the Church depends first on the fact that for him Christ's humanity is the instrument of his divinity: "To give grace or the Holy Ghost belongs to Christ as He is God, authoritatively; but instrumentally it belongs also to Him as man, inasmuch as His manhood is the instrument of His Godhead [*eius humanitas fuit instrumentum divinitatis eius*]."⁵ The ministers of the Church are then human instruments in a way that derives from and depends on the instrumentality of Christ's humanity.⁶

of communion is certainly much more important than for Thomas, but he attributes this ecclesiology to Vatican II: "The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 saw in the concept of an 'ecclesiology of communion' the central and fundamental idea of the documents of the Second Vatican Council."

⁴ Cf. ST III, q. 62, a. 1.

⁵ ST III, q. 8, a. 1, ad 1. Cf. ST III, q. 22, a. 2: "[T]hese effects [the remission of sin, the preservation in a state of grace, our unity to God] were conferred on us by [through] the humanity of Christ [*Haec autem per humanitatem christi nobis provenerunt*]."

⁶ Cf. ST III, q. 64, a. 3.

Most important is that God uses the visible, material, sense-oriented aspects of the life of the Church to communicate with us. There are several reasons for God's use of material elements in the sacraments, which provide spiritual health. The *Summa contra Gentiles* mentions three of them:

These remedies had to be administered with certain visible signs: first, because God provides for man, as for other beings, according to his condition; and it is the condition of man's nature to be led through sensible things to things spiritual and intelligible;⁷ secondly, because instruments must be proportioned to the prime cause; and the prime and universal cause of man's salvation is the Word Incarnate: it was convenient therefore that the remedies, through which that universal cause reaches men, should resemble the cause in this, that divine power works invisibly through visible signs. Third, because man fell into sin by clinging unduly to visible things. Therefore, that one might not believe visible things evil of their nature, and that for this reason those clinging to them had sinned, it was fitting that through the visible things themselves the remedies of salvation be applied to men. Consequently, it would appear that visible things are good of their nature—as created by God—but they become damaging to men so far as one clings to them in a disordered way, and saving so far as one uses them in an ordered way.⁸

The *Summa theologiae* adds a slightly different reason: “[M]an is prone to direct his activity chiefly towards material things. Lest, therefore, it should be too hard for man to be drawn away entirely from bodily actions, bodily exercise was offered to him in the sacraments, by which he might be trained to avoid superstitious practices.”⁹ The *Summa theologiae* concludes that “through the institution of the sacraments man, in a manner consistent with his nature, is instructed through sensible things; he is humbled,

⁷ There is a clear parallel between this and Thomas's epistemology: cf. *ST* III, q. 60, a. 4: “Divine wisdom provides for each thing according to its mode; hence it is written (Wis. 8:1) that ‘she . . . orders all things sweetly’: wherefore also we are told (Mt. 25:15) that she ‘gave to everyone according to his proper ability.’ Now it is part of man's nature to acquire knowledge of the intelligible from the sensible. But a sign is that by means of which one attains to the knowledge of something else. Consequently, since the sacred things which are signified by the sacraments, are the spiritual and intelligible goods by means of which man is sanctified, it follows that the sacramental signs consist in sensible things: just as in the Divine Scriptures spiritual things are set before us under the guise of things sensible. And hence it is that sensible things are required for the sacraments; as Dionysius also proves in his book on the heavenly hierarchy (*Coel. Hier. i*).”

⁸ SCG IV, ch. 56. Cf. also the beautiful text of SCG IV, ch. 74 (for which the English translation is inadequate).

⁹ *ST* III, q. 61, a. 1.

through confessing that he is subject to corporeal things, seeing that he receives assistance through them;"¹⁰ we do not stop at the level of the sensible things, but "though we cannot reach God with the senses, our mind is urged by sensible signs to approach God."¹¹ The *Contra impugnantes* adds that God works through intermediate causes in His creation.¹²

The importance of these texts for Thomas's ecclesiology can hardly be emphasized enough, although they do not speak about the Church. The Church exists, with all its human and material elements, because God loves His creation, particularly his human creation, and communicates with us in our own language. We can see this primarily in the Incarnation: What is more typical of the divine communication in human language than the Divine Word made man? The Eucharistic presence affirms the same truth that God's love for us is expressed in our language: The Incarnation "belongs to Christ's love, out of which for our salvation He assumed a true body of our nature. And because it is the special feature of friendship to live together with friends, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. ix), He promises us His bodily presence as a reward."¹³

The material dimension of the Church is considered a scandal by many, and is at the center of the concerns of the Reformation, which considered human actions to diminish divine action.¹⁴ Thomas's metaphysics solves this opposition: Divine action and human action produce both 100% of the same effect, at two different and subordinate levels.¹⁵

¹⁰ ST III, q. 61, a. 1. The assistance of the sacraments is compared by Thomas to seven basic conditions of individual and common human life, cf. ST III, q. 65, a. 1.

¹¹ ST II-II, q. 84, a. 2, ad 3.

¹² Cf. *Contra impugnantes*, proemium: "Quamvis autem ipse, cum sit omnipotens, per se ipsum posset gloriam suam ab hominibus, et salutem hominum procurare; disposuit tamen, ut ordo servaretur in rebus, ministros eligere, quorum ministerio perficeretur utrumque; unde recte tales Dei adiutores dicuntur, I Cor. III, 9." The text goes on explaining that the devil also has some human helpers.

¹³ ST III, q. 75, a. 1.

¹⁴ Cf. Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (*De servo arbitrio*, 1525), in Luther's *Works*, vol. 33 (Philadelphia: 1972), 35: "[T]he mercy of God alone does everything, and that your will does nothing, but rather is passive; otherwise, all is not ascribed to God"; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), L. II, III.9, 65-66: "It is, therefore, robbery from God to arrogate anything to ourselves, either in the will or the act"; L. III, XIII.2, 229: "The sum is, that man cannot claim a single particle of righteousness to himself, without at the same time detracting from the glory of the divine righteousness."

¹⁵ Cf. ST III, q. 64, a. 1: "There are two ways of producing an effect; first, as a principal agent; secondly, as an instrument. In the former way the interior sacramental effect is the work of God alone: first, because God alone can enter the soul wherein the sacramental effect takes place; and no agent can operate immediately

Thomas does not want in any way to deny that God's action is sufficient: "God's grace is a sufficient cause of man's salvation. But God gives grace to man in a way which is suitable to him."¹⁶ The fact that the means of salvation are given to the Church in no way shows any kind of divine insufficiency; it is divine love adapted to human nature. This divine way of acting is shown already in the Incarnation, in which God wants humanity to accept actively its gratuitous salvation, by Mary's "yes": "It was reasonable that it should be announced to the Blessed Virgin that she was to conceive Christ . . . in order to show that there is a certain spiritual wedlock between the Son of God and human nature [*quoddam spirituale matrimonium inter filium Dei et humanam naturam*]. Wherefore in the Annunciation the Virgin's consent was besought in lieu of that of the entire human nature."¹⁷

A last comment about the materiality of the Church: For Thomas, sin has made it "necessary" for God to introduce the material element into His relation to us. In the hypothetical but theologically useful "state of nature," says Thomas, relation to God was only interior: "Just as under the state of the Law of nature man was moved by inward instinct and without any outward law, to worship God, so also the sensible things to be employed in the worship of God were determined by inward instinct. But later on it became necessary for a law to be given (to man) from without: both because the Law of nature had become obscured by man's sins; and in order to signify more expressly the grace of Christ, by which the human race is sanctified. And hence the need for those things to be determinate, of which men have to make use in the sacraments."¹⁸ To

where it is not: secondly, because grace which is an interior sacramental effect is from God alone, as we have established . . . ; while the character which is the interior effect of certain sacraments, is an instrumental power which flows from the principal agent, which is God. In the second way, however, the interior sacramental effect can be the work of man, in so far as he works as a minister. For a minister is of the nature of an instrument, since the action of both is applied to something extrinsic, while the interior effect is produced through the power of the principal agent, which is God." Cf. SCG III, ch. 70.

¹⁶ ST III, q. 61, a. 1, ad 2. The sacraments would be at the center of Protestant concerns: If they produce grace, Christ's Passion is not sufficient. For Thomas, Christ's Passion is a sufficient cause of our salvation, and the necessity of the sacraments depends on the sufficiency of the Passion (cf. ST III, q. 61, a. 1, ad 3).

¹⁷ ST III, q. 30, a. 1.

¹⁸ ST III, q. 60, a. 5, ad 3. Does this dependence on material things make salvation more difficult? No, since what is required can be obtained easily, says Thomas (cf. ST III, q. 60, a. 5, ad 3), who is somewhat limited by the geographical knowledge of his time. Actually, the material elements can be more accessible than the interior dispositions alone.

desire a purely spiritual relationship to God is to forget that we are human, and that as such, we are marked by original sin.

The Human Dimension of the Relationship with God in John Paul II

The Human Being at the Centre of John Paul II's Apostolate

One of the most obvious aspects of John Paul II's apostolate was his concern for the human being. He made his program clear in his first encyclical, which is in continuity with his previous philosophical and theological studies: "[Man] is the primary and fundamental way for the Church."¹⁹ This very strong statement is in no way an anthropocentrism that would forget God, since "the Church's fundamental function in every age and particularly in ours is to direct man's gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God."²⁰ His theology's emphasis on man is due to the Incarnation, which appears in the context of the text just quoted: "[Man] is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself."²¹ The pope was inspired by *Gaudium et Spes*: "Christ the Lord indicated this way especially, when, as the Council teaches, 'by his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, in a certain way united himself with each man.'"²² Christ's union to every human being implies a union also of the Church to every human being: "Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh (cf. Jn 1:14), is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church."²³

The human dimension is not only individual: The human being is understood completely only in community, and in a community related to God.²⁴ Quoting Vatican II again, the pope taught that "Christ's Eucharistic presence, his sacramental 'I am with you,' enables the Church to discover ever more deeply her own mystery, as shown by the whole ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, whereby 'the Church is in

¹⁹ *Redemptor Hominis*, §14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, §10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, §14.

²² *Ibid.*, §13. Cf. also, §18.

²³ *Evangelium Vitae*, §3.

²⁴ Cf. *Centesimus Annus*, §24: "Man is understood in a more complete way when he is situated within the sphere of culture through his language, history, and the position he takes towards the fundamental events of life, such as birth, love, work and death. At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God."

Christ as a sacrament or sign and instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”²⁵ In Christ a unity, which was the original purpose of creation,²⁶ and which therefore corresponds to the expectation of any human heart,²⁷ is reestablished at a higher level. There is a mark of unity in every aspect of the life of the Church. In her social actions, the Church promotes every human dimension: “The social concern of the Church, directed towards an authentic development of man and society which would respect and promote all the dimensions of the human person. . . .”²⁸ To care for the whole, for all dimensions, is to be “catholic.”

Human Cooperation with God

We have seen that the Church is sacrament of the unity of humanity with God. The word “sacrament” is used here only analogically with respect to the seven sacraments,²⁹ and in a more basic way. In all these sacraments of different levels, there are some common elements, which are summarized by the pope: “By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind

²⁵ *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §63. Cf. also *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §31.

²⁶ Cf. *Slavorum Apostoli*, §16: “And, among its statements on the subject of universality, the same Council included the following: ‘All men are called to belong to the new People of God. Wherefore this People, while remaining one and unique, is to be spread throughout the whole world and must exist in all ages, so that the purpose of God’s will may be fulfilled. In the beginning God made human nature one. After his children were scattered, he decreed that they should at length be unified again (cf. Jn 11:52). . . .’” Cf. *Dominum et Vivificantem* 64: “Vatican II adds that the Church is ‘a sacrament . . . of the unity of all mankind’. . . . This unity has its roots in the mystery of creation and acquires a new dimension in the mystery of the Redemption, which is ordered to universal salvation.”

²⁷ Cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, §2: “The Church knows that this Gospel of life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person—believer and non-believer alike—because it marvellously fulfils all the heart’s expectations while infinitely surpassing them. . . . For this reason, man—living man—represents the primary and fundamental way for the Church.”

²⁸ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §1.

²⁹ Cf. *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §64: “When we use the word ‘sacrament’ in reference to the Church, we must bear in mind that in the texts of the Council the sacramentality of the Church appears as distinct from the sacramentality that is proper, in the strict sense, to the Sacraments. Thus we read: ‘The Church is . . . in the nature of a sacrament—a sign and instrument of communion with God.’ But what matters and what emerges from the analogical sense in which the word is used in the two cases is the relationship which the Church has with the power of the Holy Spirit, who alone gives life: the Church is the sign and instrument of the presence and action of the life-giving Spirit.”

of sacrament or sign and means of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind', and the source of this is he, he himself, he the Redeemer."³⁰ The three elements of this sacrament that is the Church are therefore the following:

1. sign of union with God
2. means of union with God
3. the first sacrament, source of all other sacraments, is Christ himself.

When I described Thomas's view, I insisted that the actions of the Church are not only signs or declarations of God's action, but are themselves efficient, still always depending on divine action, especially the divine action in the Redemption. Similarly, the Church as sacrament is a sign, but not merely a sign. This sign is efficient, and depends on Christ. All elements that Aquinas underlines are also present, though expressed with another vocabulary.

Most important is that, far from detracting from Christ's action, the cooperation of the Church comes from him: "The first beneficiary of salvation is the Church. Christ won the Church for himself at the price of his own blood and made the Church his co-worker in the salvation of the world. Indeed, Christ dwells within the Church. She is his Bride. It is he who causes her to grow. He carries out his mission through her."³¹ Already in creation, God had made the human being his co-worker.³² Of course the human co-worker does not always work well; he sometimes wants to be the first ruler and disturbs the order of nature.³³ But that does not destroy God's desire for human cooperation. The key that we must remember is that in our action we depend on a higher ruler: "Man, as the living image of God, is willed by his Creator to be ruler and lord. . . . Man's

³⁰ *Redemptor Hominis*, §7.

³¹ *Redemptoris Missio*, §9.

³² Cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, §43: "A certain sharing by man in God's lordship is also evident in the specific responsibility which he is given for human life as such. It is a responsibility which reaches its highest point in the giving of life through procreation by man and woman in marriage. As the Second Vatican Council teaches: 'God himself who said, 'It is not good for man to be alone' (Gen 2:18) and 'who made man from the beginning male and female' (Mt 19:4), wished to share with man a certain special participation in his own creative work. Thus he blessed male and female saying: 'Increase and multiply' (Gen 1:28).'" Cf. *Laborem Exercens*, §25.

³³ Cf. *Centesimus Annus*, §37: "Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him."

lordship however is not absolute, but ministerial: it is a real reflection of the unique and infinite lordship of God.”³⁴

I have said that for Thomas human cooperation with God applies to the life of the whole Church, and in a specific way, to Mary. For John Paul II also, Mary cooperates in a specific way with God, because the “fiat of Mary—‘let it be to me’—was decisive, on the human level, for the accomplishment of the divine mystery.”³⁵ Her role is not only passive, but really active,³⁶ and her yes involves the whole Church.³⁷

On this first topic—cooperation of the Church with God—there is a real convergence between Thomas’s and the John Paul’s theologies. Both see the Church as actively cooperating with divine action, because God wills it so. In Thomas, we can see that this basic Catholic understanding connects with his metaphysics, which the pope did not have to develop in his magisterial teaching.

Church Unity and Church Membership

Church Unity and Church Membership

According to St. Thomas Aquinas

In the Church the unity of the universe created by God, and above all the unity of the creatures who are God’s image,³⁸ is restored. Significantly, Christ was born “while the world was governed by one ruler,”³⁹ and one of the reasons for the Incarnation is that Christ must be “the head of all human beings according to grace” (*caput omnium hominum quantum ad gratiam*).⁴⁰ This is Thomas’s basic ecclesiological pattern.

³⁴ *Evangelium Vitae*, §52.

³⁵ *Redemptoris Mater*, §13.

³⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, §44: “And here Mary is not only the model and figure of the Church; she is much more. For, ‘with maternal love she cooperates in the birth and development’ of the sons and daughters of Mother Church. The Church’s motherhood is accomplished not only according to the model and figure of the Mother of God but also with her ‘cooperation.’”

³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, §5: “The reality of the Incarnation finds a sort of extension in the mystery of the Church—the Body of Christ. And one cannot think of the reality of the Incarnation without referring to Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word.”

³⁸ The other rational creatures, the angels, are also members of the Church: cf. *ST* III, q. 8, a. 4; q. 80, a. 2, ad 2. Christ is the head of the angels also according to his human nature: cf. *De veritate* q. 29, a. 4, ad 5.

³⁹ Cf. *ST* III, q. 35, a. 8, ad 1: “It was fitting that Christ should be born while the world was governed by one ruler, because ‘He came to gather His own [Vulg.: ‘the children of God’] together in one’ (Jn. 11:52), that there might be ‘one fold and one shepherd’ (Jn. 10:16).” Of course this symbol must be taken as such. We know that parts of the world were not part of the Roman Empire.

⁴⁰ *ST* III, q. 19, a. 4, ad 1.

Christ Is the Head of the Church, His Body

It is well known that Thomas considers the Church first of all as Body of Christ. This does not mean that he ignores other names or images for the Church. He sees the Church as prefigured in the Old Testament;⁴¹ and in the New Testament he sees her as Body of Christ,⁴² but also as “Christian People,”⁴³ tabernacle of God,⁴⁴ Temple of God,⁴⁵ Spouse of Christ,⁴⁶ Kingdom of God,⁴⁷ and so forth.

To say that Christ is the Saviour of the whole world or to say that he is the Head of his Body are the same: “It is written (1 Tim. 4:10): ‘Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of the faithful,’ and (1 Jn. 2:2): ‘He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.’ Now to save men and to be a propitiation for their sins belongs to Christ as Head. Therefore Christ is the Head of all men.”⁴⁸ As salvation is offered to all human beings, all belong to the Church: “[T]he body of the Church is made up of the men who have been from the beginning of the world until its end [*corpus Ecclesiae constituitur ex hominibus qui fuerunt a principio mundi usque ad finem ipsius*].”⁴⁹ But some belong to the Church in act, even unto the next world, and some belong to the Church only potentially.⁵⁰ Furthermore, people who lived before

⁴¹ Cf., for example, *ST* I–II, q. 102, aa. 2–6; II–II, q. 173, a. 3.

⁴² Cf. the texts quoted later, and also *ST* III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 3; III, q. 58, a. 4, ad 1.

⁴³ Cf. *ST* II–II, q. 99, a. 1, ad 2 (“populus Christianus per fidem et sacramenta Christi sanctificatus est”).

⁴⁴ Cf. *ST* I–II, q. 102, a. 4, ad 9.

⁴⁵ Cf. *In Psalm.* 17.7 (Busa 17.4).

⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 44.10 (Busa 44.7): “[S]ponsa christi est ecclesia.”

⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 33.1 (Busa 33.1): “[R]egnum david est populus judaeorum, regnum dei est ecclesia”; In IV Sent., dist. 49, q. 1, quaest. 5; Busa: q. 1, articulus 2E ; *SCG* IV, ch. 83. I have discussed this topic in more detail in “Eglise et Royaume I: le débat théologique,” *Nova et Vetera* 74 (1999): 5–36; “Eglise et Royaume II: Vatican II,” *Nova et Vetera* 75 (2000): 39–61. I had missed an important article with which I fully agree: Christoph Schönborn, OP, “L’Eglise de la terre, le Royaume de Dieu et l’Eglise du Ciel,” *Esprit et Vie* 96 (1986): 689–97.

⁴⁸ *ST* III, q. 8, a. 3, sed contra. Congar summarized well this teaching: See Yves Marie-Joseph Congar, OP, *Esquisses du mystère de l’Eglise* (Paris: Cerf, 1952), 66: “[D]éfinir l’Eglise comme un corps se trouvant avec Dieu dans un rapport de vie, c’est la considérer comme étant l’humanité lorsqu’elle oriente sa vie vers Dieu, par les vertus théologiques. . . . Et donc, dans la Somme théologique, toute la IIa Pars est ecclésiologique.”

⁴⁹ *ST* III, q. 8, a. 3.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ST* III, q. 8, a. 3: “We must therefore consider the members of the mystical body not only as they are in act, but as they are in potentiality. Nevertheless, some are in potentiality who will never be reduced to act, and some are reduced

Christ can belong to the Church by anticipation: “[T]he ancient Fathers, by observing the legal sacraments, were borne to Christ by the same faith and love whereby we also are borne to Him, and hence the ancient Fathers belong to the same Church as we;”⁵¹ in their case as in all cases, salvation is given by Christ.⁵²

The Holy Spirit and the Church

To belong to the Church, to the Body of Christ, means to be under the salvific influence of the Head of the Body. Since the Holy Spirit is given by Christ and communicates the salvation obtained by Christ, the one mediator, the Spirit is not given outside the Body of Christ, outside the Church.⁵³

The Spirit is the soul of the Church,⁵⁴ who communicates to her by charity a participation in divine unity;⁵⁵ He “unites the Church together, and communicates the goods of one member to another”⁵⁶ (this is the

at some time to act; and this according to the triple class, of which the first is by faith, the second by the charity of this life, the third by the fruition of the life to come. Hence we must say that if we take the whole time of the world in general, Christ is the Head of all men, but diversely [*Christus est caput omnium hominum, sed secundum diversos gradus*]. For, first and principally, He is the Head of such as are united to Him by glory; secondly, of those who are actually united to Him by charity; thirdly, of those who are actually united to Him by faith; fourthly, of those who are united to Him merely in potentiality, which is not yet reduced to act, yet will be reduced to act according to Divine predestination; fifthly, of those who are united to Him in potentiality, which will never be reduced to act; such are those men existing in the world, who are not predestined, who, however, on their departure from this world, wholly cease to be members of Christ, as being no longer in potentiality to be united to Christ.”

⁵¹ ST III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 3.

⁵² Cf. ST III, q. 27, a. 3: “[I]t does not seem fitting that any one should be freed from that condemnation, according to the flesh, except after His Incarnation.”

⁵³ Cf. ST II–II, q. 176, a. 1, ad 3: “As Augustine says (Tract. xxxii in Joan.), ‘(. . .) whoever is not in the Church, receives not the Holy Ghost.’”

⁵⁴ Cf. *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, a. 9: “Sicut videmus quod in uno homine est una anima et unum corpus, et tamen sunt diversa membra ipsius; ita Ecclesia Catholica est unum corpus, et habet diversa membra. Anima autem quae hoc corpus vivificat, est spiritus sanctus.”

⁵⁵ Cf. ST II–II, q. 24, a. 2: “[C]harity can be in us neither naturally, nor through acquisition by the natural powers, but by the infusion of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and the Son, and the participation of Whom in us is created charity, as stated above.” Cf. *In Ioan.*, cap. 7, lect. 5: “Quia iam universalis ecclesia linguis gentium loquitur, quia per spiritum sanctum datur caritas; Rom. V, V. 5: caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris, et haec, faciens omnia communia, facit quemlibet cui libet loqui.”

⁵⁶ ST III, q. 68, a. 9, ad 2.

Communion of the saints⁵⁷ or the communion within the one mystical person who is the Church)⁵⁸ and preserves the peace among the members of the Church.⁵⁹ To be a member of the Church and to have the Spirit are one and the same thing: "If somebody does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ [i.e., to the Body of Christ]. Because the unity of the Holy Spirit makes the unity in the Church."⁶⁰

The presence of the Spirit outside of the Body of Christ would contradict St. Thomas's anthropology: For him, unlike all authors before him and most after him, the human person is one substance composed of body and soul, and not two substances, much less one substance that only comprises either the soul or (oddly enough) the body.⁶¹ Furthermore, as I have already said, God acts in His relation to all creatures according to

⁵⁷ Cf. *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, 10: "Sicut in corpore naturali operatio unius membri cedit in bonum totius corporis, ita in corpore spirituali, scilicet Ecclesia. Et quia omnes fideles sunt unum corpus, bonum unius alteri communicatur. Apostolus, Rom. XII, 5: singuli autem alter alterius membra. Unde et inter alia credenda quae tradiderunt apostoli, est quod communio bonorum sit in Ecclesia; et hoc est quod dicitur, sanctorum communionem. Inter alia vero membra Ecclesiae, principale membrum est Christus, quia est caput. Ephes. I, 22–23: ipsum dedit caput super omnem Ecclesiam, quae est corpus ipsius. Bonum ergo Christi communicatur omnibus Christianis, sicut virtus capitis omnibus membris; et haec communicatio fit per sacramenta Ecclesiae, in quibus operatur virtus passionis Christi, quae operatur ad conferendam gratiam in remissionem peccatorum. . . . Sic ergo per hanc communionem consequimur duo: unum scilicet quod meritum Christi communicatur omnibus; aliud quod bonum unius communicatur alteri."

⁵⁸ Cf. *ST* III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 1: "The head and members are as one mystic person [caput et membra sunt quasi una persona mystica]; and therefore Christ's satisfaction belongs to all the faithful as being His members. Also, in so far as any two men are one in charity, the one can atone for the other as shall be shown later." Cf. *ST* III, q. 15, a. 1, ad 1; q. 19, a. 4.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ST* II–II, q. 183, a. 2, ad 3: "Just as in the natural body the various members are held together in unity by the power of the quickening spirit, and are dissociated from one another as soon as that spirit departs, so too in the Church's body the peace of the various members is preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit, Who quickens the body of the Church [in corpore Ecclesiae conservatur pax diversorum membrorum virtute spiritus sancti, qui corpus Ecclesiae vivificat], as stated in Jn. 6:64. . . ."

⁶⁰ "[S]i quis spiritum christi non habet, hic non est eius. Nam unitas spiritus sancti facit in ecclesia unitatem" (*In Ioan.*, cap. 1, lect. 10).

⁶¹ Cf. *SCG* II, ch. 69. Even when—after death—the soul is separated from the body, it keeps a natural inclination to the union with the body, cf. *ST* I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 6. Thomas is isolated in this position; cf. A. Capizzi, "Anima e corpo nel XIII secolo," *Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana* (1951), 24–42, 205–27.

their nature: He does not act in His relation to the human community in a way that would contradict the nature of all human individuals.

Cardinal Journet, whose ecclesiology Fr. Congar described as the “application of St. Thomas’s principles,”⁶² sees in the Church two souls, one depending on the other. The Holy Spirit, “Uncreated Soul,” gives to the Church a created soul, which is its charity; in its full state, this charity is “oriented” by the teaching of the Church and made “conformed to Christ” by the sacraments.⁶³ He strictly maintains that “where the created soul of the Church is, there is her body; conversely, where the body of the Church is, there is her soul.”⁶⁴ This is his principle of the “coextensivity” of body and soul that, in my view, shows the link between Thomas’s anthropology and ecclesiology, precisely because God relates to human beings according to their nature.⁶⁵ The key to that unity between

⁶² Journet’s ecclesiology “apparaît comme la mise en œuvre même de la synthèse de saint Thomas” (Yves M.-J. Congar, *Esquisses du mystère de l’Eglise* [Paris: Cerf, 1953], 7).

⁶³ Cf. Charles Journet, *L’Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, vol. 3 (Saint-Maurice: Saint-Augustin, 2000), 1434 (ed. 1951, vol.2, 872): “Si la Trinité veut se faire une demeure vivante au milieu de ses créatures, si l’Esprit saint veut devenir le principe, plus encore l’hôte et la forme incréée de l’Eglise, bref son Ame incréée, il faudra qu’il revête les hommes, pour les préparer à de si hautes destinées, de dons spirituels qui seront comme un épanchement de la grâce capitale déposée dans la sainte âme du Christ, tête de l’Eglise, à savoir de sa puissance sacerdotale, de sa grâce, de sa vérité, et qui deviendront les éléments, soit présupposés, soit constitutifs, de l’âme créée de l’Eglise; ce sont, nous l’avons dit, les caractères sacramentels, les grâces sacramentelles, et enfin la droite orientation juridictionnelle en tant qu’émanant des pouvoirs juridictionnels et en tant que reçue dans le cœur des fidèles. Bref, pour tout résumer en un mot, il faudra que l’Esprit saint revête les hommes de la charité en tant qu’elle est sacramentelle et orientée. Voilà, en effet, l’âme créée indivise de l’Eglise. Cette âme descend vers les hommes. Elle s’incarne en eux. Elle les transforme intérieurement. Les vertus permanentes et les pouvoirs secrets qu’elle leur confère seront pour eux le principe d’une nouvelle manière d’agir, d’œuvrer. Dès lors, un changement se produira jusque dans leur condition et leur comportement extérieurs. L’ensemble de ces manifestations extérieures, voilà le corps de l’Eglise.”

⁶⁴ “Où est l’âme créée de l’Eglise, là est son corps; inversement, où est le corps de l’Eglise, là est son âme” (Charles Journet, *L’Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, vol. 2 (Saint-Maurice: Saint Augustin, 1999), 43 (ed. 1951, vol. 2, xxxiv).

⁶⁵ I have presented the topic in “La coexistence de l’âme et du corps en philosophie et en ecclésiologie,” *Nova et Vetera* 73 (1998): 23–33. Some interpreters of St. Thomas think that the Head of the Church has some action that does not strictly build the Body; cf. Yves M.-J. Congar, OP, “Vision de l’Eglise chez Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 62 (1978): 539: “La vérité du Christ-Tête dépasse les limites de l’Eglise. Ce ne sont pas des énoncés d’ecclésiologie, mais de christologie.” I agree with Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, when he

the body and soul of the Church is that any action of the Spirit, any act of charity, even by non-baptized, must have some visibility: "[I]t is impossible, either that the soul of the Church, as received in men . . . does not work to reveal outside the body of the Church, or that the body of the Church can appear where is not her soul."⁶⁶ Perhaps most or all us, because of our insufficient holiness, will not be able to discern this visibility, which will be for us a kind of "invisible visibility."⁶⁷

Who Does Belong to the Church?

Contemporary Christians will wonder: Does this ecclesiology mean that only people who are clearly Christians, or even Catholics, can be saved? At least since the time of Pius IX,⁶⁸ this is not the teaching of the Church. Neither is it Thomas's teaching, since for him all human beings belong, in a way, to the Church. The understanding of the Church, which derives from St. Robert Bellarmine, that "the Church is an assembly of men, as visible and palpable as the assembly of the Roman people, or the Kingdom of France, or the Republic of the Venetians,"⁶⁹ popularized by the Counter-Reformation, leads to a deep misunderstanding of what Church membership could mean.

On first glance Thomas and Bellarmine seem to have similar views, because of the fundamental importance of the sacraments in Thomas's

comments on Congar's opinion: "Cette affirmation est pour le moins étonnante, et je doute que S. Thomas l'eût reprise à son compte" ("Yves Congar et l'ecclésiologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 82 [1998]: 218–19).

⁶⁶ "[I]l est impossible, ou bien que l'âme de l'Eglise, en tant que reçue dans les hommes . . . ne travaille pas à faire apparaître au-dehors le corps de l'Eglise, ou bien que le corps de l'Eglise puisse apparaître là où n'est pas son âme" (Charles Journet, *L'Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, vol. 3 [Saint-Maurice: Saint Augustin, 2000], 1553; ed. 1951, vol. 2, 950).

⁶⁷ Cf. Charles Journet, *L'Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, vol. 3, 1557–58; ed. 1951, vol. 2, 953: "Où paraît quelque chose de l'âme de l'Eglise, paraît quelque chose du corps de l'Eglise. Les justes qui appartiennent à l'Eglise par le désir de leur charité, voto, mentaliter, sans encore lui appartenir de manière complète, *re, corporaliter*, tendent, même sans le remarquer, à extérioriser leur désir. Toutefois le sens véritable de ce désir demeurant souvent caché aux yeux et inaperçu d'eux-mêmes, on pourra parler, à propos de ces justes, d'appartenance invisible à l'Eglise visible."

⁶⁸ Cf. Pius IX, Allocution *Singulari Quadam*, in Consistorio Secreto, 9.12.1854; Encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerere*, 10th August 1863, Denz. 2865–66.

⁶⁹ "Ecclesia enim est coetus hominum ita visibilis et palpabilis, ut est coetus populi romani, vel regnum Galliae, aut respublica Venetorum" (St Robert Bellarmine, SJ, *De controversiis christianae fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos*, II, lib. 3, *De Ecclesia militante*, caput II [Naples: Josephum Giuliano, 1857], tomus II, 75).

ecclesiology, based on the fact that “through the sacraments of the New Law man is incorporated with Christ.”⁷⁰ A logical conclusion follows: “[I]t is clear that no one can obtain salvation but through Christ. . . . Consequently it is clear that all are bound to be baptized: and that without Baptism there is no salvation for men.”⁷¹ The similarity between Thomas’s ecclesiology and the so-called “Bellarminian” ecclesiology (which is rather unfair to Bellarmine), however, is limited by Thomas’s broader understanding of the Church: Despite the importance of the sacraments, “God did not so limit His power to the law of the sacraments.”⁷² God can give by other means the grace that is “normally” given by the actual sacraments. Someone can receive the grace of baptism by desire, without receiving it actually: “Those who are unbaptized, though not actually in the Church, are in the Church potentially. And this potentiality is rooted in two things—first and principally, in the power of Christ, which is sufficient for the salvation of the whole human race; secondly, in free-will.”⁷³ The salvation obtained for all is not unrelated to baptism, since this is a baptism that can be obtained by the right orientation of the free will: “He who is not baptized, though he belongs not to the Church either in reality or sacramentally, can nevertheless belong to her in intention and by similarity of action [*potest tamen ad eam pertinere intentione et similitudine actus*], namely, in so far as he intends to do what the Church does, and in baptizing observes the Church’s form, and thus acts as the minister of Christ, Who did not confine His power to those that are baptized, as neither did He to the sacraments.”⁷⁴ The same applies to confirmation⁷⁵

⁷⁰ ST III, q. 62, a. 1.

⁷¹ ST III, q. 68, a. 1. Cf. III, q. 69, a. 5: “By Baptism man is born again unto the spiritual life, which is proper to the faithful of Christ, as the Apostle says (Gal. 2:20): ‘And that I live now in the flesh; I live in the faith of the Son of God.’ Now life is only in those members that are united to the head, from which they derive sense and movement. And therefore it follows of necessity that by Baptism man is incorporated in Christ, as one of His members.” About the Church and sacraments according to Aquinas, cf. Matthew Levering, *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 121–25.

⁷² ST III, q. 27, a. 1, ad 2.

⁷³ ST III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 1.

⁷⁴ ST III, q. 67, a. 5, ad 2.

⁷⁵ Cf. ST III, q. 72, a. 6, ad 1: “The Divine power is not confined to the sacraments. Hence man can receive spiritual strength to confess the Faith of Christ publicly, without receiving the sacrament of Confirmation: just as he can also receive remission of sins without Baptism. Yet, just as none receive the effect of Baptism without the desire of Baptism; so none receive the effect of Confirmation, without the desire of Confirmation. And man can have this even before receiving Baptism.”

and penance.⁷⁶ To be complete, one must add that for Thomas only adults, and not children, can receive the sacrament by desire⁷⁷ (some will later suggest that the desire of the parents can obtain the grace of baptism). The case of the Eucharist is more complex, although in the same line, but I do not need to develop it here.⁷⁸

For Thomas, then, the idea of salvation outside the Church, or the idea of the Spirit working outside the Body of Christ would contradict the basic principles of his ecclesiology, of his Christology (Christ is the only

⁷⁶ Cf. *ST* III, q. 86, a. 2: "It is impossible for a mortal actual sin to be pardoned without penance, if we speak of penance as a virtue. . . . But the sacrament of Penance . . . is perfected by the priestly office of binding and loosing, without which God can forgive sins, even as Christ pardoned the adulterous woman, as related in Jn 8, and the woman that was a sinner, as related in Luke vii, whose sins, however, He did not forgive without the virtue of penance: for as Gregory states (*Hom. xxxiii in Evang.*), 'He drew inwardly by grace,' i.e., by penance, 'her whom He received outwardly by His mercy.'"

⁷⁷ Cf. *ST* III, q. 73, a. 3: "[B]y Baptism a man is ordained to the eucharist, and therefore from the fact of children being baptized, they are destined by the Church to the eucharist; and just as they believe through the Church's faith, so they desire the eucharist through the Church's intention, and, as a result, receive its reality. But they are not disposed for Baptism by any previous sacrament, and consequently before receiving Baptism, in no way have they Baptism in desire; but adults alone have: consequently, they cannot have the reality of the sacrament without receiving the sacrament itself."

⁷⁸ The basic element is that "the reality of the sacrament is the unity of the mystical body, without which there can be no salvation; for there is no entering into salvation outside the Church [*res sacramenti est unitas corporis mystici, sine qua non potest esse salus, nulli enim patet aditus salutis extra Ecclesiam*], just as in the time of the deluge there was none outside the Ark, which denotes the Church, according to 1 Pt 3:20,21. And it has been said above, that before receiving a sacrament, the reality of the sacrament can be had through the very desire of receiving the sacrament. Accordingly, before actual reception of this sacrament, a man can obtain salvation through the desire of receiving it, just as he can before Baptism through the desire of Baptism" (*ST* III, q. 73, a. 3). But in fact the desire for the Eucharist comes from baptism (cf. III, q. 73, a. 3), and for that reason it does not seem that for Thomas a non-baptized person can normally have the real desire for the eucharist, although he does not exclude it completely: although "the non-baptized are not to be allowed even to see this sacrament" (III, q. 80, a. 4, ad 4), if it were to happen that an unbeliever receives the eucharist, he could "perchance" have a sufficient intention to receive it sacramentally (cf. III, q. 80, a. 3, ad 2). The reception—actual or by desire—of the Eucharist does not seem to be indispensable for salvation, because "Baptism is the beginning of the spiritual life, and the door of the sacraments; whereas the eucharist is, as it were, the consummation of the spiritual life, and the end of all the sacraments. . . . Consequently, the reception of Baptism is necessary for starting the spiritual life, while the receiving of the eucharist is requisite for its consummation" (III, q. 73, a. 3).

mediator), and of his theology of the Trinity (the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son eternally and temporally). Yet, one risks misunderstanding his texts if one reads them with the restricted ecclesiological vocabulary inherited from the Counter-Reformation.

Church Unity and Church Membership According to John Paul II

The John Paul II's teaching on the Body of Christ focused on the sacraments: "Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice."⁷⁹ He normally understood the sacraments in the light of their actual reception. John Paul's basic understanding of the Body of Christ thus focused on what Thomas would consider a more or less full membership to the Body of Christ, although the pope also said that all human beings belong to or are somehow ordained to the Church,⁸⁰ which echoes Aquinas. Without being a "Bellarminian,"⁸¹ John Paul II usually spoke about the Church in her "normal" sacramental fullness. In these terms, it is not easy to address the question of the salvation of non-baptized people.

The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* deals with this question. It affirms first of all that Christ is the only Saviour, which is also the key to Thomas's

⁷⁹ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §22. Cf. *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §61: "This new coming of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and his constant presence and action in the spiritual life are accomplished in the sacramental reality. In this reality, Christ, who has gone away in his visible humanity, comes, is present and acts in the Church in such an intimate way as to make it his own Body. As such, the Church lives, works and grows 'to the close of the age.' All this happens through the power of the Holy Spirit"; *Veritatis Splendor*, §21: "Having become one with Christ, the Christian *becomes a member of his Body, which is the Church* (cf. Cor 12:13, 27). By the work of the Spirit, Baptism radically configures the faithful to Christ in the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection; it 'clothes him' in Christ (cf. Gal 3:27): 'Let us rejoice and give thanks', exclaims Saint Augustine speaking to the baptized, 'for we have become not only Christians, but Christ. . . . Marvel and rejoice: we have become Christ!' (In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus, 21, 8: CCL 36, 216)."

⁸⁰ Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, §9 (which quotes *Lumen Gentium*, §13): "To this catholic unity of the people of God, therefore, . . . all are called, and they belong to it or are ordered to it in various ways, whether they be Catholic faithful or others who believe in Christ or finally all people everywhere who by the grace of God are called to salvation."

⁸¹ He reacts against a contemporary equivalent of it, a reduction of the Church to a human society, which human sciences could fully study (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, §21), and he insists on the necessary unity of body and soul in the human person (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, §49), without connecting that to ecclesiology.

ecclesiology.⁸² It does not affirm, however, that only those who are explicitly Christians can be saved, since salvation is offered to all. Thus we are confronted with what seems to be a paradox: "It is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind and the necessity of the Church for salvation."⁸³ To solve the paradox the John Paul distinguished between explicit and implicit membership to the Church:

The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. . . . For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his Sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation.⁸⁴

All elements of this passage are important: Non-explicit Christians, who had no real opportunity to meet or understand the Gospel, can be saved, but always under two conditions: (1) salvation occurs through a grace which comes from Christ, is communicated by the Spirit and is related to the Church, and (2) this process involves some free cooperation on their part.

What I just called an "implicit" membership to the Church could also be expressed in terms of visibility, as John Paul did, quoting Vatican II: "The same Dogmatic Constitution listed at length 'the elements of sanctification and truth' which in various ways are present and operative beyond the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church."⁸⁵ Knowing as we do the painful divisions among the baptized, which were not so present in the reality and

⁸² Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, §5: " '[T]here is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:10, 12). . . . No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit. Christ's one, universal mediation, far from being an obstacle on the journey toward God, is the way established by God himself, a fact of which Christ is fully aware. Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value *only* from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his."

⁸³ *Redemptoris Missio*, §9.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, §10.

⁸⁵ *Ut Unum Sint*, §12.

in the consciousness of the thirteenth century, we accept that the “visible boundaries” of the Roman Catholic Church are not equivalent to the visibility of the Church.⁸⁶ This leads to more delicate questions.

The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Church is especially delicate. The first principle is the link between Christ and the Spirit: “in the Holy Spirit-Paraclete, who in the mystery and action of the Church unceasingly continues the historical presence on earth of the Redeemer and his saving work, the glory of Christ shines forth.”⁸⁷ The Spirit acts in Christ’s life and then in continuity with him: “This is the same Spirit who was at work in the Incarnation and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and who is at work in the Church. He is therefore not an alternative to Christ, nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ.”⁸⁸ The fact that the Spirit’s action is always in continuity with Christ’s action does not prevent it from being universal: He can reach every heart,⁸⁹ including the hearts of those who are not Christians: In them He prepares and “begins” the mission.⁹⁰

This indispensable link between Christ and the Holy Spirit is the basis for any understanding of the relationship between the Spirit and the Church: He unifies her in love,⁹¹ renews her,⁹² helps her deepen Reve-

⁸⁶ Cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, §13: “[I]t is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum.” This is especially true of the Eastern Churches, in which the Catholic Church acknowledges all sacraments; cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, §50.

⁸⁷ *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §7.

⁸⁸ *Redemptoris Missio*, §29.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, §28: “The Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and in her members. Nevertheless, his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time. The Second Vatican Council recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through the ‘seeds of the Word,’ to be found in human initiatives—including religious ones—and in mankind’s efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself.”

⁹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, §45: “In proclaiming Christ to non-Christians, the missionary is convinced that, through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death.”

⁹¹ Cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, §76: “[T]he Spirit . . . builds up communion in love creates between us a new fraternity and solidarity, a true reflection of the mystery of mutual self-giving and receiving proper to the Most Holy Trinity.”

⁹² Cf. *Fidei Depositum*, §4: “May it [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*] serve the renewal to which the Holy Spirit ceaselessly calls the Church of God, the Body of Christ, on her pilgrimage to the undiminished light of the kingdom!”

lation,⁹³ and gives her the missionary impulse.⁹⁴ It also helps interpret some sentences where John Paul spoke—quoting Vatican II—about “the Holy Spirit’s activity also ‘outside the visible body of the Church’ ”⁹⁵ or about “not excluding the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church’s visible boundaries.”⁹⁶ These statements are not meant to deny the necessary link between any action of the Spirit and the Church,⁹⁷ because that would undermine the link between the Spirit and Christ.

Still, on this point it would be difficult not to see a dissimilarity between Aquinas and some—few—texts by John Paul II: To speak about the Spirit acting outside the Church in any way, even taking into consideration the distinction between visible and invisible Church, cannot be expressed in Thomas’s ecclesiology, because for him it would contradict both the link between the Head and Body of the Church and his conviction of a link between anthropology and divine action with human beings. Certainly John Paul II agreed with these two principles, and there is no real difference between him and Aquinas in this regard. The differences are on two levels:

1. The vocabulary: The pope must use a vocabulary that contemporary readers understand, and most contemporary readers still understand by “Church” simply some kind of visible society. To teach to them a broader understanding of the Church remains a task that has been well begun since Vatican II.
2. The consciousness of the fact that many do not belong to the Catholic Church as such, among whom many are baptized. This fact requires some distinctions between different levels of influence of Christ and of the Spirit.

⁹³ Cf. *Fides et Ratio*, §11: “[B]y the unceasing action of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13) the contents of revealed truth may find their full expression.”

⁹⁴ Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, §21: “The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church’s mission.” The same encyclical says that “love, which has been and remains the driving force of mission . . .” (*Redemptoris Missio*, §60). There is therefore at least a real parallel between the action of the Spirit and love.

⁹⁵ *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §53.

⁹⁶ *Redemptoris Missio*, §18.

⁹⁷ Cf. one of the quoted sentences in its context: “The result is a unique and special relationship which, while not excluding the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church’s visible boundaries, confers upon her a specific and necessary role” (*Redemptoris Missio*, §18). Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, §29: “[T]he universal activity of the Spirit is not to be separated from his particular activity within the body of Christ, which is the Church.”

Church Authority and the Possibility of the Proclamation of the Faith

Structure of Faith and Infallibility in the Thomistic School

All Christians should agree that the Church must preach the faith. But how is it to be done? And above all: What is the role of the Church and of her authority in preaching the faith? This issue is at the heart of ecumenical dialogue. I think that Thomas and the Thomistic school can give an important contribution to theology in this field.

One important element of the question of preaching faith is the authority of the pope. I think that Thomas's contribution to that particular question is due to his systematic approach to the logic of Christian faith.

Several theologians involved in the dialogue about the ministry of the successor of Peter have noticed that the solution cannot be found in historical studies. The Orthodox Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, is especially clear: "If there is a necessity for the primacy of the Bishop of Rome this could not be because history demands it, for even if history demanded it (which is in my view doubtful, to say the least) it would not make a necessary thing for the Church's *esse*. The same thing would have to be said if the reasons offered for such a primacy were to be practical and utilitarian. . . . The primacy of the Bishop of Rome has to be theologically justified or else be ignored altogether."⁹⁸ Eminent theologians such as John Henry Newman,⁹⁹ Charles Journet,¹⁰⁰ and Joseph Ratzinger¹⁰¹ have insisted on the fact that history cannot provide

⁹⁸ Metropolitan John of Pergamon (Zizioulas), "Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach," in James F. Puglisi, SA, ed., *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church. Toward a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 123.

⁹⁹ Cf. John Henry Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, In a Letter addressed to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, DD, on occasion of his Eirenicon of 1864; and in a Letter addressed to the Duke of Norfolk, on occasion of Mr. Gladstone's Expostulation of 1874, Vol. II. (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1900), 312: "For myself, I would simply confess that no doctrine of the Church can be rigorously proved by historical evidence: but at the same time that no doctrine can be simply disproved by it."

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Charles Journet, *What is dogma?* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 57: "God helps us, and to suppose that we can rediscover, by means of purely human disciplines: archaeology, philology, exegesis, history of religions, contemporary philosophies, the meaning of 'things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart conceived, the welcome God has prepared for those who love him' (1 Cor. 2:9)."

¹⁰¹ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "Discorso in apertura del Simposio," in *Il primato del successore di Pietro* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 17: "Indubbiamente è vero che la storia come tale non può fornire una certezza apodittica della verità di

the necessary certitude.¹⁰² That makes a systematic approach at least a necessary complement to historical research.

Thomas studies systematically the conditions for faith, in a passage that summarizes the method of proclaiming the faith that is demonstrated in the New Testament:

Two things are requisite for faith. First, that the things which are of faith should be proposed to man: this is necessary in order that man believe anything explicitly. The second thing requisite for faith is the assent of the believer to the things which are proposed to him. Accordingly, as regards the first of these, faith must needs be from God. Because those things which are of faith surpass human reason, hence they do not come to man's knowledge, unless God reveal them. To some, indeed, they are revealed by God immediately, as those things which were revealed to the apostles and prophets, while to some they are proposed by God in sending preachers of the faith.¹⁰³

In the "normal" Christian economy the proposal of faith arrives to individuals through some disciples of Christ, through the Church. This intervention of the disciples also comes from the fact that the Church must always explain faith with new words, throughout the centuries.¹⁰⁴ And human intervention in the process of faith can pose a problem, which is well described by one of the most important commentators of Thomas, Cardinal Cajetan:¹⁰⁵

Two things interact in faith . . . namely [first] the assent and [second] the proposition and explanation of the things which must be believed; on the point of view of the assent, faith depends only on God as agent, object end and rule. But on the point of view of the proposition of the

fede"; 18: "[T]ale collaborazione [tra storia e teologia] esige che la questione della valutazione dottrinale dei dati storici sia fatta alla luce della Tradizione, come luogo e criterio della coscienza veritativa della fede ecclesiale."

¹⁰² At least history should be read theologically; cf. Hermann J. Pottmeyer, article "Bischof," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Vol. 2 (Freiburg im Breslau: Herder, 1994 [3rd ed.]), col. 484–85: "Die Ursachen, die zur Entwicklung und Durchsetzung des Monepiskopats führten, werden von der historischen Forschung unterschiedlich gewichtet. Übereinstimmung besteht darüber, daß es sich um ein Bündel von Ursachen handelt. . . . Während die Historiker die vielfältige Bedingtheit der Entwicklung sieht, erblickt der Glaube im historischen Verlauf das Ergebnis der Führung Gottes."

¹⁰³ *ST* II–II, q. 6, a. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *ST* I, q. 29, a. 3, ad 1.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas De Vio, 1469–1534, Master of the Order of Preachers (1508–1518), Cardinal in 1517, met Luther in 1518.

things to be believed, it can depend on angels and human beings, through whom God proposes this or that to be believed; on this point of view, "faith comes from hearing the word of God", as Rom. 10 says. And so that no error might appear in the proposal or explanation of things to believe, the Holy Spirit provided a created rule, which is the sense and the doctrine of the Church, so that the authority of the Church is the infallible rule of the proposition and explanation of things which must be believed by faith. Therefore, two infallible rules concur to faith, namely divine revelation and the authority of the Church; there is between them this difference: divine revelation is the formal reason of the object of faith, and the authority of the Church is the minister of the object of faith.¹⁰⁶

John of St. Thomas adds that there are always controversies on the meaning of Scripture, which sometimes have an impact on faith, and that in such cases the authority to decide on the correct interpretation cannot be given to all: The controversy would just go on and faith would be uncertain.¹⁰⁷ He adds that to give the power of judging infallibly to more than one person (e.g., some important bishop in different parts of the world) would leave intact the question of who can judge if they disagree.¹⁰⁸ John of St. Thomas is perfectly in line with St. Thomas, who argues for the

¹⁰⁶ "Constat autem quod, cum ad fidem concurrant duo, ut infra patet, scilicet assensus et propositio atque explicatio credendorum, fides ex parte assensus a solo Deo dependet ut agente, obiecto, fine et regula. Ex parte autem propositionis credendorum potest dependere ab angelis et hominibus, mediantibus quibus Deus proponit haec vel illa esse credenda : ex hac enim parte 'fides ex auditu est verbi Dei', ut dicitur ad Rom. X. Et propterea quoad proponendum et explicandum credenda, ne possit accidere error, providit Spiritus Sanctus de infallibili regula creata, sensu scilicet et doctrina Ecclesiae : ita quod auctoritas Ecclesiae est infallibilis regula proponendi et explicandi ea quae sunt fide tenenda. Unde, duabus concurrentibus ad fidem infallibilibus regulis, scilicet revelatione divina et auctoritate Ecclesiae, inter eas tanta est differentia quod revelatio divina est ratio formalis obiecti fidei, auctoritas autem Ecclesiae est ministra obiecti fidei" (Cajetan, *In ST.*, II-II, q.1, a.1, no. X; my translation).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. John of St. Thomas, *In Iam*, q. 1, disp. I, a. 3; in Ioannes a Santo Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, In Summam theologicam D. Thomae, Nova editio, Tomus primus, in Primae Partis Quaestiones I-VII (Paris: Vivès, 1883), 433: "Non potest autem quilibet hoc declarare resolutorie determinando, et infallibiliter, cum de hoc ipso sit tota controversia, an contineatur in Scriptura id quod Ecclesia sic proponit et declarat, et quidam negent, alii affirmant, unde si quilibet posset hoc declarare, quilibet pro sua parte pronuntiaret, et manerent omnes in eadem confusione; ergo oportet, quod ipsa declaratio, et propositio Ecclesiae careat omni suspitione, et fallibilitate, alias semper dubitarem, an ita contineatur in Scriptura." My translation.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *In Iam-IIae*, qq. 1-7, disp. I, a. 3, in *Cursus theologicus*, Tomus septimus, in Secundam Secundae (1886), 185: "XVIII . . . si autem in his quae sunt de substantia

supreme authority of one in the Church of the earth as in the Church of Heaven, for the sake of the common good and of peace.¹⁰⁹ Still, Thomas views the power of the pope within the context of the infallibility of the whole Church,¹¹⁰ and as limited by the nature of some objects.¹¹¹ Even though for Thomas the pope has a universal immediate jurisdiction, he should not use it in a way that would destroy the authority of the local bishops.¹¹² Of course the ministry of the pope should not be considered only as a way of solving problems in the Church. Infallibility is only one aspect of his ministry, but it is a very contentious one among Christians, and such an issue cannot be fully resolved with historical or even biblical arguments. The systematic approach of the Thomistic School, founded on the New Testament, is an important contribution.¹¹³

To summarize the approach of Thomas and his school:

1. because God wants it, faith normally requires human preachers;
2. this preaching requires new expressions of the same faith through the centuries;
3. these human preachers have different interpretations of Scripture;
4. therefore God has given to the Church an infallible authority, so that faith remains certain;

religionis omnes illae supremae potestates deberent eodem modo convenire, et eodem modo regere, alias si unus aliter se haberet quam alter, periret unitas fidei, et religionis Ecclesiae, multo melius id efficitur per unum.”

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *SCG*, IV, ch. 76.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ST* III, q. 72, a. 12, which speaks about the infallibility of the Church as such.

¹¹¹ Above all, “nec Papa nec aliquis mortalium potest ecclesiasticam hierarchiam divinitus ordinatam immutare aut eversare” (*Contra impugnantes*, cap. 4, § 4, ed. Leon. vol. 41, A 72, l. 311–313; cf. *ST* III, q. 62, aa. 2 and 4); for Thomas, the argument is more theological than juridical, cf. *ST* II–II, q. 88, a. 11: “[T]he Pope cannot make a man who has made his religious profession cease to be a religious, although certain jurists have ignorantly held the contrary.”

¹¹² Cf. *Contra impugnantes*, cap. 4, § 13, ed. Leon. vol. 41, l. 1242–1249: “Quod autem Papa universalem pontificem se prohibet nominari, non hoc ideo est quia ipse non habeat auctoritatem immediatam et plenam in qualibet ecclesia; sed quia non praeficitur cuilibet particulari ecclesiae ut proprius et specialis illius ecclesiae rector, sic enim cessarent omnium aliorum pontificum potestates.”

¹¹³ About this topic cf. Yves M.-J. Congar, OP, “Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Infallibility of the Papal Magisterium (*ST* II–II, q. 1, a. 10),” *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 81–105; Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP, “La place du pape dans l’Eglise selon saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue Thomiste* 86 (1986): 392–422; idem, “Le rôle des apôtres dans la communication de la Révélation selon la Lectura super Ioannem de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 103 (2002): 317–50; Ulrich Horst, OP, *Papst-Konzil—Unfehlbarkeit. Die Ekklesiologie der Summenkommentare von Cajetan bis Billuart* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1978).

5. this authority, at the supreme level, is suitably given to one only, since otherwise the risk of division would remain.

The argument provides at least some theological probability for the ministry of the pope as the Catholic Church professes it, whereas any exegetical or historical argument could not reach such a level of probability. Beyond this point, only faith gives the ultimate answer.

The Teaching Authority of the Church According to John Paul II

When John Paul II spoke about the ministry of the person called “to occupy the episcopal see that once belonged to Peter in this city of Rome,”¹¹⁴ he did not limit himself—nor did Thomas—to discussing the teaching authority exercised on controversial points of doctrine. He also sometimes added a personal touch due to the fact that he was the one then actively exercising this ministry.¹¹⁵ Clearly he insisted more on collegiality than Thomas did, due to the relative rediscovery sanctioned by Vatican II.¹¹⁶ He also spoke of his ministry in the context of ecumenical dialogue,¹¹⁷ which was also new, compared to the thirteenth century. Beyond such differences, can we find in the theology of John Paul II the basic lines of Thomistic theology that I have just explained? Instead of developing the whole teaching of John Paul II on this question, I shall merely show that the five main arguments used by the Thomistic School in favor of the papal ministry were also present in John Paul II.

1. First of all, to preach faith is the duty of Christians: “No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ *Slavorum Apostoli*, §28.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, §4: “This is a specific duty of the Bishop of Rome as the Successor of the Apostle Peter. I carry out this duty with the profound conviction that I am obeying the Lord, and with a clear sense of my own human frailty”; *Ut Unum Sint*, §91: “It is important to note how the weakness of Peter and of Paul clearly shows that the Church is founded upon the infinite power of grace (cf. Mt 16:17; 2 Cor 12:7–10). Peter, immediately after receiving his mission, is rebuked with unusual severity by Christ, who tells him: ‘You are a hindrance to me’ (Mt 16:23).”

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, §5; *Apostolos suos*, §1–2, 9–10; *Evangelium Vitae*, §5; *Ut Unum Sint*, §94.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, §4: “In our ecumenical age, marked by the Second Vatican Council, the mission of the Bishop of Rome is particularly directed to recalling the need for full communion among Christ’s disciples.”

¹¹⁸ *Redemptoris Missio*, §3; cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, §101: “‘We are writing you this that our joy may be complete’ (1 Jn 1:4). The revelation of the Gospel of life is given

2. The Church must guard the deposit of faith,¹¹⁹ and such a proclamation always requires a “deeper investigation into the truths of faith and morals,”¹²⁰ “a deeper insight into Revelation and of an understanding in the light of faith of new historical and cultural situations,”¹²¹ new theological explanations¹²² (with the help of reason),¹²³ and the interpretation of the signs of the times.¹²⁴ This has always applied to the necessities of inculturation.¹²⁵

to us as a good to be shared with all people: so that all men and women may have fellowship with us and with the Trinity (cf. 1 Jn 1:3). Our own joy would not be complete if we failed to share this Gospel with others but kept it only for ourselves.”

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Fidei Depositum*, Introduction: “Guarding the deposit of faith is the mission which the Lord has entrusted to his Church and which she fulfils in every age.”

¹²⁰ *Ad tuendam fidem*, §1.

¹²¹ *Veritatis Splendor*, §27.

¹²² Cf. *Sapientia Christiana*, §III: “From this assiduous contact with reality, theologians are also encouraged to seek a more suitable way of communicating doctrine to their contemporaries working in other various fields of knowledge, for ‘the deposit of faith, or the truths contained in our venerable doctrine, is one thing; quite another is the way in which these truths are formulated, while preserving the same sense and meaning.’”

¹²³ Cf. *Fides et Ratio*, §42: “Faith asks that its object be understood with the help of reason”; *Fides et Ratio*, §65: “Philosophy contributes specifically to theology in preparing for a correct auditus fidei with its study of the structure of knowledge and personal communication, especially the various forms and functions of language. No less important is philosophy’s contribution to a more coherent understanding of Church Tradition, the pronouncements of the Magisterium and the teaching of the great masters of theology, who often adopt concepts and thought-forms drawn from a particular philosophical tradition. In this case, the theologian is summoned not only to explain the concepts and terms used by the Church in her thinking and the development of her teaching, but also to know in depth the philosophical systems which may have influenced those concepts and terms, in order to formulate correct and consistent interpretations of them.”

¹²⁴ Cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, §2: “The Church remains deeply conscious of her ‘duty in every age of examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, so that she can offer in a manner appropriate to each generation replies to the continual human questionings on the meaning of this life and the life to come and on how they are related.’”

¹²⁵ Cf. *Slavorum Apostoli*, §10: “[T]hey always succeeded in maintaining perfect orthodoxy and consistent attention both to the deposit of tradition and to the new elements in the lives of the peoples being evangelised”; *Slavorum Apostoli*, §11: “In order to translate the truths of the Gospel into a new language, they had to make an effort to gain a good grasp of the interior world of those to whom they intended to proclaim the word of God in images and concepts that would sound familiar to them. They realized that an essential condition of the success of their missionary activity was to transpose correctly Biblical notions and Greek theological concepts into a very different context of thought and historical experience.”

3. There are some errors, against which the pope has the duty of protecting the faithful: "To protect the faith of the Catholic Church against errors arising from certain members of the Christian faithful, especially from among those dedicated to the various disciplines of sacred theology, we, whose principal duty is to confirm the brethren in the faith (Lk 22:32). . . ." ¹²⁶
4. In such a situation, the ministry of the successor of Peter is the necessary means for keeping communion in faith: "It is impossible to remain faithful to the Tradition while breaking the ecclesial bond with him to whom, in the person of the Apostle Peter, Christ himself entrusted the ministry of unity in his Church." ¹²⁷
5. Within a theology of episcopal collegiality, the ministry of one is necessary to unity: "full communion, of which the Eucharist is the highest sacramental manifestation, needs to be visibly expressed in a ministry in which all the Bishops recognize that they are united in Christ and all the faithful find confirmation for their faith." ¹²⁸

All the steps from faith as such to the ministry required for its permanent unity were present in the teaching of John Paul II as in the Thomistic School. Of course I have selected short texts, which in the original were not as systematically ordered as I have arranged them for our present purpose. To organize the arguments is a matter more of theology than of magisterial teaching, and here Thomistic theology can really help to explain some magisterial texts, which it assisted in bringing to light in the first place.

Conclusion

I have spoken about three topics which I consider keys to St. Thomas's ecclesiology:

1. The Church is God's co-worker. This implies a whole understanding of divine and human causality, at different levels of being, without which the existence of the Church is at least "relativized."
2. To belong to the Church means to receive grace from Christ Head of the Church, through the Holy Spirit. Church member-

¹²⁶ *Ad tuendam fidem*, §1.

¹²⁷ *Ecclesia Dei*, §4.

¹²⁸ *Ut Unum Sint*, §97.

ship and salvation are synonyms. Thomas's understanding of "Church" is far broader than what post-Counter-Reformation Christians usually mean.

3. The Thomistic School analyses systematically the preaching of faith, from the fact that God has decided to communicate his revelation through human preachers to the authority necessary to protect faith from human errors. That gives at least a probability to the constant Petrine ministry in the Church.

All these elements are also present in the writings of John Paul II. Especially striking is his insistence on the human element (human rights), whose connection to more typically religious aspects is not always well understood. In the basic understanding of these three very Thomistic theological developments, there is a deep continuity between Thomas and Pope John Paul II. The vocabulary, linked to the historical context, is probably the main reason for some differences on the second point. Finally, other apparent dissimilarities can be explained by the difference normally existing between the works of a theologian, who must explain his arguments and their mutual links, and those of a pastor who cannot and should not reduce magisterial teaching to the level of theological speculation. Both works are therefore complementary. 

